



The African child,
portrait of the
week by
Bahgory

10

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Tragedy hits home

In every culture home signifies far more than a building, however elaborate or simple that building may be. On a very basic level being at home means being safe and secure — doubly so when that home is a sanctuary from the urban jungle into which megacities such as Cairo, with their hustle and bustle, pointed arc and jammed, perpetually noisy, streets, have become.

When a modern apartment building collapsed on top of its residents and their visitors in Heliopolis this week — the third such tragedy in this same district in four years — obliterating entire families and producing the unbearable images of horror that continue to surface from beneath the rubble of the Heliopolis building, this sense of home collapses along with it.

There is no denying the tragedy. The sense of horror and sorrow it evokes will be with us for some time but gradually, as always happens, it will be drowned out by city life, by the hustle and bustle from which "home" is our only sanctuary.

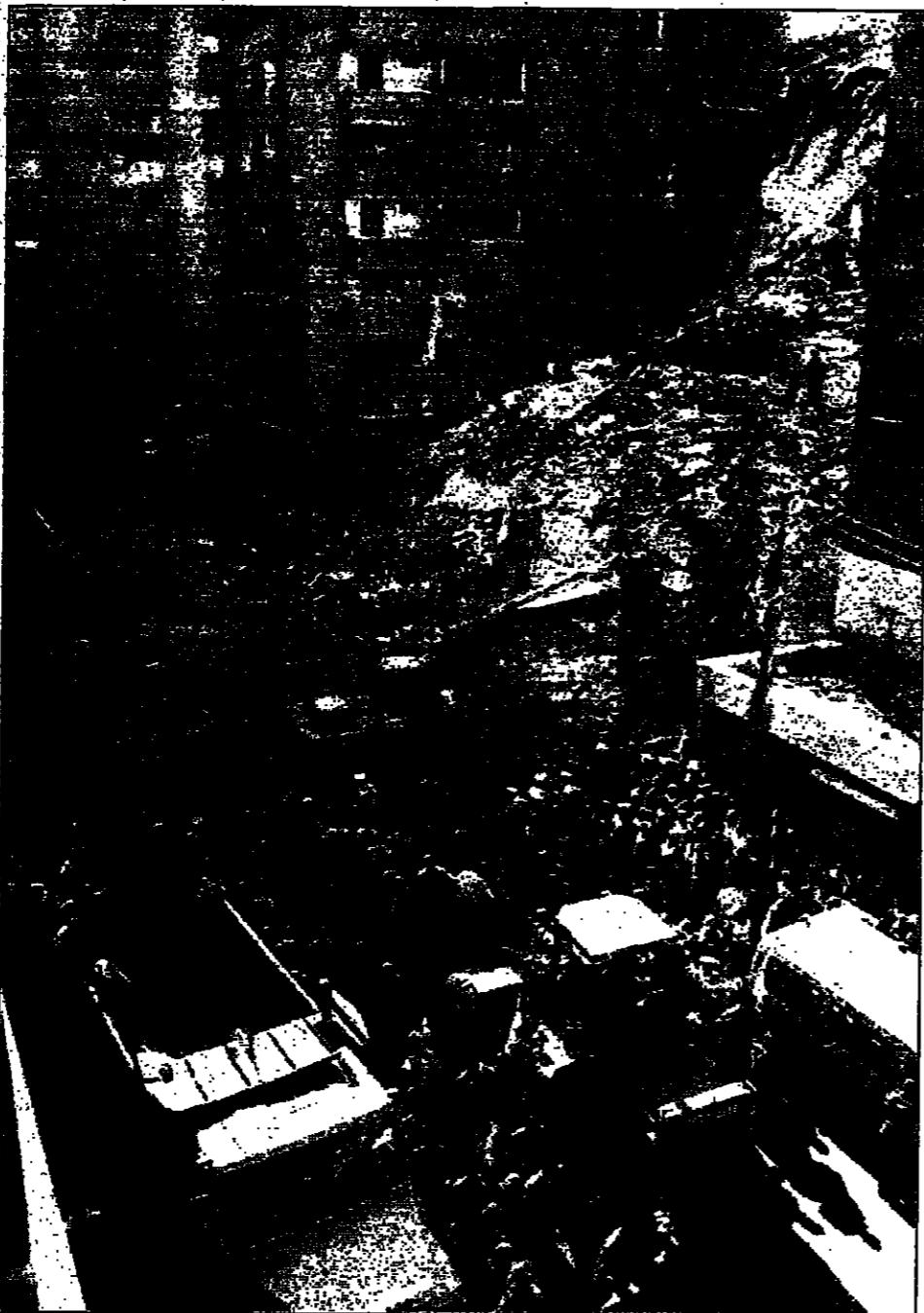
Nothing in the story of the Heliopolis disaster indicates that it was a one-off fluke. But while it is still too early to point accusing fingers, one thing is clear. We cannot blame fate.

We must, then, act quickly. Many questions await to be asked. To what extent does current legislation deter wide-scale abuses in construction practices? What guarantees are there that this legislation is enforced? And what of the legislation governing structural adjustments in owned, rather than leased, apartments, given that apartment ownership has replaced rentals in a great many buildings during the past two decades? Is there appropriate legislation limiting the right of apartment owners to make structural adjustments to their apartments? Do mechanisms to enforce such legislation exist?

What guarantees are in place to ensure that building violations — which threaten the lives of innocent families — are redressed within a specific period of time. What of the new Building Code passed by parliament last June, which stipulates that violations will be corrected within 15 days of a ruling?

The questions are many. One can only hope that they will be answered within the next few days, and answered decisively, so that the Egyptian home can become, once more, a place of sanctuary, and a fundamental human right will be guaranteed.

Hosny Guindy



An unknown number of victims still lie beneath the rubble of the collapsed building at 5 Abdallah Nour Street, Heliopolis, while anguished relatives maintain a constant vigil, hoping beyond hope that their loved ones will be found alive (see pp. 2 & 3)



Europe's role welcomed

BOTH King Hussein of Jordan and President Hosni Mubarak agreed that Europe had a role to play in the peace process, but it should not substitute or overshadow that of the US, reports Nevine Khalil from Sharm El-Sheikh.

After three hours of discussions, a business lunch and a drive through the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh, Mubarak told reporters on Tuesday that Europe "has its own interests in the Middle East and its endeavours will bolster the American efforts." He added however, that the US role is "pivotal" and cannot be replaced by any other. "We cannot say that the European role will replace the US role," Mubarak said. "That is impossible."

King Hussein agreed, saying, "Europe has an important role to play because it's close to our

region, [but] is not seeking a role that would contradict that of the United States but one that would be complementary."

The two leaders met to try to find ways to bridge the gap between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators and review the faltering peace process. Egypt and Jordan are the only Arab countries which signed peace treaties with Israel, in 1979 and 1994 respectively. The Sharm El-Sheikh talks were also attended by Egypt's Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri, his Jordanian counterpart, Abdel-Karim El-Kabir, Mubarak's chief political adviser Osama El-Baz and

Egyptian Minister of Information Saifat El-Sherif.

Addressing a joint press conference, Mubarak explained that US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross left the region on Monday after failing to bring closer Israeli and Palestinian viewpoints. "Ross went back because he could not resolve the differences between the Israelis and Palestinians on schedule," Mubarak said.

Egyptian sources had told *Al-Ahram Weekly* during last month's Washington summit that the US wanted the two parties to reach agreement and begin implementation within 30

days of the summit.

"The gap may have been narrowed slightly," Mubarak went on, "but there still remain fundamental, sensitive issues [unresolved]." He advised the two sides not to try to exploit the current deadlock and to allow time for differences to be smoothed out. "The wheel of peace [began turning] 18 years ago, and nobody will be able to stop it from moving," he added.

Mubarak, however, would not outline a time frame for progress in the peace process. Asked by the Weekly how much more patient the Arabs should be in the face of the hard-line Is-

raeli policy, he said: "I can't give a fixed date, but let us try to help so that we can proceed forward." He added that Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu had assured him on several occasions that he will honour Israel's agreements with the Palestinians. "We would like to help him honour his commitments," Mubarak said.

King Hussein also remarked that Netanyahu had promised him and Mubarak a "surprise". presumably progress on the peace track, and hoped that "it comes soon."

About Israel's muscle flexing and threats to wage war against Syria, Mubarak said that "we must forget the word 'war' if we really want peace." He added that Israel must stop beating the drums of war, because "war is very dangerous."

Two days earlier, Mubarak met former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres to discuss the current stalemate in the peace process. Peres said that Israel's government was starting to realize that its hardline ideology would not achieve peace. "Only now are they beginning to understand that if you want peace for nothing, you have nothing," Peres said in Sharm El-Sheikh. (see p.4)

Backdoor hot pursuit

Clashes with Palestinians and the threat of war with Syria provide a grim backdrop for Israel's stalled talks with the Palestinians. Tarek Hassan reports from Gaza

After Palestinians and Israelis resumed talks on Tuesday on a partial withdrawal from the West Bank town of Hebron, there was no sign that an agreement was within reach in the absence of American mediator Dennis Ross, who returned to Washington, and Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, who is on a European tour, differences persisted. The two sides blamed each other for the continuing deadlock.

Israel held Arafat personally responsible for delaying an agreement charging the Palestinian president sought to make the maximum possible gains from mounting domestic, regional and international pressures on the Israeli government.

For their part, the Palestinians claim that the Likud government of Binyamin Netanyahu was attempting to alter the Hebron redeployment agreement previously reached with Labour's Shimon Peres. The Israeli government is simply required to implement this agreement instead of wasting time and making false allegations," said Ahmed Abdel-Rahman, secretary-general of the Palestinian cabinet.

According to El-Tayeb, Abdel-Rahman, secretary-general of the Palestinian presidential office, the talk snags on Israel's demand that its troops have the right of "hot pursuit" in all of Hebron — home to about 100,000 Arabs and 400 Jewish settlers.

Although Israel officially had informed the Palestinians that it was dropping this demand, it has not, Abdel-Rahman said. The demand was put forward to the Palestinians again, but disguised in new terminology.

Israel now is claiming the right of uni-

versary intervention to deal with threats that may arise and cannot be handled by the Palestinian Authority. "This is rejected by us because what it means is hot pursuit," said Abdel-Rahman. He said the proposed new wording, which strips the Palestinian Authority of its powers, could be interpreted by Israel in various ways to suit its own interests.

Israel is lying and stalling, Abdel-Rahman said. The proof is that Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen), the top Palestinian negotiator, was held up for half an hour last Saturday at the Erez crossing point as he headed to a fresh round of talks at the Tel Aviv home of US ambassador Martin Indyk. Abbas was allowed to cross into Israel only on the express orders of chief-of-staff Amnon Shahak, Abdel-Rahman said.

"Who is stalling then? Amfam or Netanyahu?" he asked.

Hebron was again a flashpoint of violence on Tuesday as settlers shouting "Hebron is ours" shoved, cursed and spat at two PLO officials who toured the city, Reuters and The Associated Press reported. Israeli police escorted the two Palestinians away from the area.

About 1,500 right-wing protesters demonstrated in Jerusalem on Tuesday night outside the US consulate to voice opposition to the Hebron pullout, blasting US mediation efforts as a pressure tool on Israel. "We hope the government will stay strong and have the courage not to turn over parts of the city of our fathers to the hands of terrorists," said Dov Lieber, rabbi of the Kiryat Arba settlement near Hebron.

"We are here today to help Bibi [Netanyahu] keep his promise to the people of Hebron," said Nadia Matar, 30, a settler (see p.5).

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photo: Abd-el-Wahab El-Sherif

Death by folly

Rescue workers, using giant cranes and hydraulic ladders, continued to search the rubble of a collapsed apartment building in Heliopolis for survivors. But as time passed, hopes were running low. Shaden Shehab visits the site of the disaster

At 6.25pm on Sunday, the thud of a loud explosion shook a section of the upmarket suburb of Heliopolis. The deafening noise was followed by columns of dust and smoke rising into the sky. Neighbours and passersby thought an earthquake was in progress.

People, many covered in blood, some in their pyjamas, ran out of 5 Abdallah Nour Street, behind the Heliopolis Club. The 13-storey apartment building had collapsed into a heap of masonry and twisted metal trapping residents and visitors under the rubble.

By Wednesday morning the Interior Ministry had confirmed that 28 people had been killed, 20 injured and at least 50 others were missing. At least 23 people were pulled out alive from the debris, but some of them died later in hospital. Many of the missing were feared dead, but rescue workers continued to sift the rubble, still hoping to find people alive.

Another elderly woman sat on the ground, slapping her face in mourning for a missing son. "This can't happen, get me my son back," she said repeatedly. Her other son tried to comfort her, but he himself was sobbing uncontrollably.

Safwat Said said that his brother worked for an electricity company housed in the building. "He needs a miracle to stay alive under all this rubble," he wept.

Safwat Said, who happened to be passing through the area, reported: "I heard a noise similar to an explosion, then the ground shook. I saw people run and then I could see nothing because of the heavy dust. I thought it was an earthquake."

lights powered by generators. A fleet of 150 ambulances stood by to assist the injured and transfer them to local hospitals.

"Nora, Nora, my daughter Nora," wailed an elderly woman dressed in black. "Do you believe that my daughter is buried under all this rubble? She is so young, she worked for a travel agency [inside the building]. What did she do to deserve this?"

Among the people pulled alive from the ruins were an American woman named Samantha Mikschke and her Egyptian friend, Noha Mohamed Fawzi. They were found on Tuesday, 36 hours after the collapse, suffering from minor injuries. But Mikschke's mother was still missing. The three were visiting the building at the time of the collapse to look at an apartment that belonged to Fawzi's uncle, which the Americans were considering renting.

"We heard a loud noise and I realised that a building had fallen down, but I thought it was another building," Fawzi said. She spent the next one and a half days "praying and reciting the Qur'an" and talking to Mikschke. The two were trapped back-to-back.

Two men were saved on Monday after rescue workers heard voices crying for help. In order to reach them, the workers

"saw people coming out from the back of the building, some had blood covering parts of their bodies," said Mustafa Ezzat, a resident of a nearby building.

A third, Samir Abdallah, who owned the travel agency on the eighth floor, was saved, but was reported to be in a critical condition in hospital after losing both legs.

The missing include former Sudanese Information Minister Mohamed Mahgoub and his wife, who are residents of the building. The wife and three children of Lutfi Moussa, a diplomat with the Saudi Arabian Embassy in Cairo, are also missing. Moussa happened to be outside the building when it fell. Also unaccounted for is Khadija Yousra Al-Torki, the sister of Ahmed Al-Torki, the Saudi Arabian under-secretary for communications. She also lived in the building.

Three of the dead were members of the same family — Jordanian businessman Wassim Al-Admani, 45, his wife, Wedgane Abdel-Mullah, 40, and their son, Mohamed, a 20-year-old student. Wedgane Abdel-Mullah was pulled out alive after being trapped under slabs of cement for

nearly 12 hours, but died in hospital. Another woman, who worked for the travel agency, was also pulled out alive after doctor amputated her left leg. She also died in hospital.

The bodies of a housewife, a travel agency employee, a retired professor and a plumber were found on Monday.

There were fears that visitors to the building, which housed two clinics, an x-ray centre, the travel agency and the electricity company, could also have been trapped.

Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri visited the site of the tragedy on Sunday evening. He told Egyptian television: "The most important thing now is to find the largest possible number of survivors. It is too early to tell the cause of the collapse. What we are working on is getting as many people as possible out alive."

A committee of professors of construction engineering has been established to determine the reasons for the collapse. Various theories circulated. The first is that the demolition of walls by construction engineers working on an apartment on the first floor had caused one of the pillars supporting the building to crack. The apartment, located at the front of the building, was recently bought by the Federation of Egyptian Banks, which planned to use it as an exchange room. This theory is corroborated by the fact that the rear part of the building suffered only a partial collapse. Three construction engineers, alleged to be responsible for the demolition of the walls, were taken into custody and charged with manslaughter.

Gen. Moustafa Shafei, head of the army's Engineering Corps, who supervised the rescue work, told the Middle East News Agency that a preliminary investigation had indicated that some changes had been made to the columns supporting the building. "This building, which withstood two earthquakes, could not have collapsed unless one of the columns supporting it was tampered with," he said.

Accusing fingers were also pointed at Raouf Wissa Ibrahim, the building's owner. It is said that in 1975, six years after the apartment block was built, Ibrahim added five extra storeys, despite having authorisation to add only one floor. It is also alleged that he ignored an order issued by municipal authorities in 1993 to make repairs to the building. Ibrahim has been remanded in custody and charged with manslaughter.



After 36 hours entombed in darkness, rescue workers pulled Noha Ismail (above) and her American friend, Samantha Mikschke



'Nora, Nora, my daughter Nora,' wailed an elderly woman (left). "Do you believe that my daughter is buried under all this rubble? She is so young... What did she do to deserve this?'

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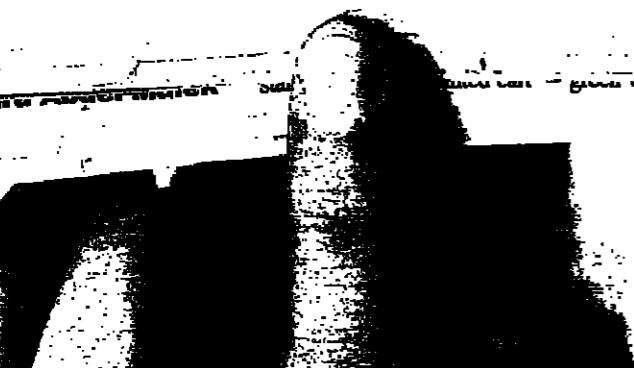
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مكتبة من الأصل



photo: Saad Ibrahim

Can it happen again?

"Those irresponsible, greedy criminals who waste the lives of innocent people to make extra money should be hanged." This is how Interior Minister Hassan El-Alfi reacted to the Heliopolis tragedy. His remarks, probably an emotional outburst, summed up the feelings of many Egyptians who have become tired of seeing laws made only to be broken.

And, as is customary following such a tragedy, there have been calls for tougher penalties for offenders, including one from El-Alfi himself. Although the reason for the collapse has not yet been determined, El-Alfi underlined the need to stiffen penalties for violators of construction laws. "The law should be enforced strictly and those who violate it, gambling with the lives of innocent people, should face the penalty of losing their freedom," he said. Fines, he added, are not an adequate deterrent because of the huge profits violators stand to make.

A new piece of legislation containing tougher penalties will be debated today (Thursday) at a meeting of provincial governors.

Housing Minister Mohamed Ibrahim Seliman said that the law dealing with construction licences will be amended to prohibit additions to already existing buildings. For example, if a licence has been issued for a four-storey building, that building should remain at four storeys; a second licence would never be issued for the building of additional floors.

The new legislation will also include tougher penalties for those who violate their construction licences. Seliman said:

A 24-article Construction Law was passed by the People's Assembly in June, replacing a 1976 law. It provided tougher penalties for building irregularities, and also sought to simplify the bureaucratic procedure for obtaining a construction licence. Under the new law, violators could face a sentence of life imprisonment with hard labour if their offence resulted in the

death of one or more people. The law also gave provincial governors greater powers to curb building violations, both with regard to height restrictions — including the power to demolish violating storeys — and construction materials.

According to Talat Mustafa, deputy chairman of the Housing Committee of the People's Assembly, the collapse of the Heliopolis building does not mean that the new law is ineffective "but it does prove that the old law was highly inadequate and largely responsible for many construction offences."

Mahmoud Mahfouz, chairman of the Shura Council's Manpower and Services Committee, shared this view. The Heliopolis tragedy, he said, was clearly the result of the ineffective legislation of the 1970s. Although the 1976 law provided penalties ranging from five to 10 years in jail for the use of substandard construction materials, poor design or implementation of designs, and inadequate supervision of work, the earthquake of October 1992 revealed alarming examples of the use of substandard materials, even in expensive areas like Heliopolis, he said.

Mahfouz argued that the problem would not be solved by new laws. The construction of substandard buildings was the result of "the ineffective enforcement of existing legislation."

Housing expert Miled Hanna agreed that tougher penalties "will not solve the problem. They will only scare people away

from constructing buildings." What is needed, he said, is "to change some of the officials in charge to make room for other people who are creative and innovative."

Hanna, talking to *Al-Ahram Weekly*, described the collapse of the Heliopolis building as "shameful", especially as there are structures in this country that have survived for over a thousand years."

"It is a complicated and inter-related problem that stems from economic, social and bureaucratic factors," he said. Declaring that "we simply cannot go on like this," Hanna suggested that Prime Minister Ganzouri establish a committee to study the various aspects of the issue.

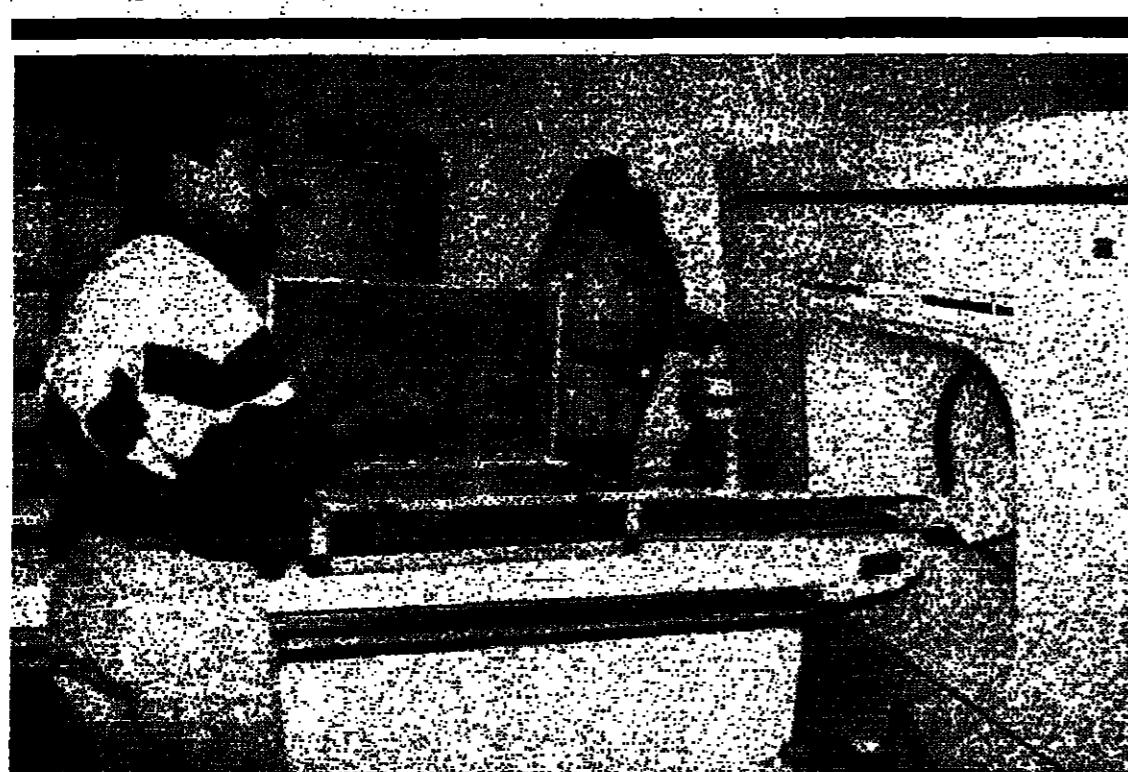
The problem began with the introduction of the economic open door policy, *infatih*, in the 1970s. "During the period of *infatih*, building owners wanted to build extra floors in order to sell them and make a hefty profit, instead of renting them out at low prices," Hanna said.

In the 1990s, another phenomenon emerged, with owners allocating the ground and first floors to businesses, such as banks and supermarkets. The space and decoration have to be changed accordingly and no licensing is required, Hanna noted. "In the process, walls, and even columns, could be damaged."

Sunday's tragedy was the third to hit Heliopolis in five years. As a result of the October 1992 earthquake, a 15-storey building on El-Hegaz Street collapsed like a pack of cards, killing 67 people. The owner of the building, Kamel Ali Awad, her husband and a partner were each sentenced to 10 years imprisonment.

On 28 January 1993, a six-storey building, also on El-Hegaz Street, came down, killing 20 people and injuring 22 others. The dead included the building's owner, Ezzat Ali Mahmoud.

Reported by Gamal Essam El-Din, Shaden Shehab and Julian Hawawi.



THE MISR Radiology Centre, located on the ground floor of the collapsed building, escaped unscathed. "All the patients who were in the centre at the time survived," Dr Mohamed Abu-Hoda Darwish, one of the centre's four owners, told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Darwish, who had been at the centre's other branch, arrived ten minutes after the collapse. "When I went to the site and found a huge hill of rubble, I assumed that the staff and patients had been killed. But then I discovered that a part of the building at the back had not collapsed. I found people coming

out of the centre. Only four of them were injured on their way out, and they are now in hospital."

The centre's two-million dollar's worth of equipment also survived. "The medical equipment is unscathed and could function normally. My only worry is that it will get ruined by the rescue work," said Darwish. "Of course I'm not asking that the equipment take priority over people. But the centre is willing to take responsibility for transferring the equipment at any appropriate time."

The only culprits?

PROSECUTION officials have filed manslaughter charges against the owner of the collapsed building, Raouf Wissa Ibrahim, together with three construction engineers, and ordered that the men be remanded in custody for four days.

Ibrahim, who owns a car sales agency and lives in Zamalek, was also accused of making unauthorised additions to the building and unintentionally inflicting damage on the property of others.

According to the building's file, kept at the Heliopolis Housing Department, Ibrahim and his partner, Rifat Hassan Shehata, obtained a licence in 1969 to construct an eight-storey apartment building. In 1975, Ibrahim constructed five extra storeys, despite the fact that he had only obtained a licence for one extra floor. As a result, he was fined LE121,300 in 1976.

The file also reveals that Ibrahim was ordered by the Heliopolis Housing Department to make repairs to the building in 1993. The repairs were not made.

Under interrogation, Ibrahim denied that he had made unauthorised additions to the building, or that he had been instructed by the Housing Department to make repairs.

The three construction engineers also accused of manslaughter were named as: Ashraf Abd El-Nagari, Ahmed Mahmoud Riad and Ahmed Shehata Abd-el-Hamid. The three were employed by the Federation of Egyptian Banks to make alterations to an apartment recently bought by the federation, which planned to use it as an exchange room. The three were said to have been responsible for the demolition of walls in the apartment which could have caused one of the pillars supporting the building to crack.

A committee of professors of construction engineering has been set up to determine the reason for the building's collapse.

Brush with death

PALESTINIAN policeman Tawfiq Mohammed Hassan, who was slightly injured by the falling masonry, has cheated death for the third time, according to reports. Hassan, 26, was waiting inside an x-ray clinic in the building to undergo x-rays for bullet wounds suffered during last month's clashes between Israeli troops and Palestinian police in the Palestinian territories when the collapse occurred. He suffered only minor bruises.

Hassan was one of the first victims found by rescue workers, and reportedly led rescuers to other victims trapped beneath the rubble. He told reporters the last month's shooting and the collapse of the apartment building were not his only brushes with death.

In February 1994, he was wounded in the left arm when Jewish settler Baruch Goldstein sprayed Palestinian worshippers with automatic weapons fire in the West Bank town of Hebron, killing 29 Palestinians.

"I thank God for saving my life once more," he said. "Now, I will be able to see my two-week-old son again."

Rubble thieves

AS RESCUE workers searched the rubble for survivors, others were sifting through the debris for valuables. At least 10 men have been arrested at the site of the collapsed building for stealing money and objects such as gold jewellery belonging to residents. The 10 include a mechanic, an electrician and a carpenter. They all said they had arrived at the site to help rescue workers in the search for survivors, but were unable to resist pocketing the valuables they found scattered in the debris.

14 and with no one

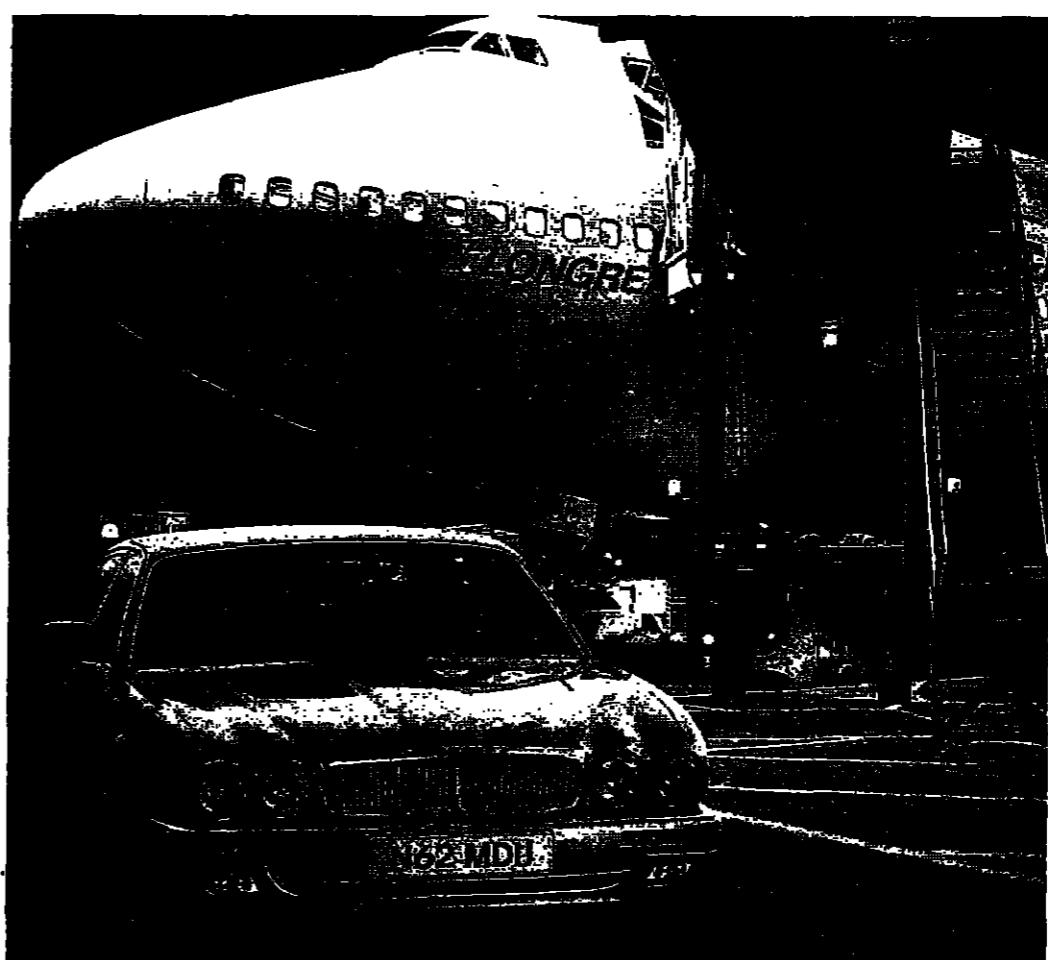
FOURTEEN year-old Hadi Makram went to take a private lesson at 5pm last Sunday. Naturally, he expected to finish the lesson and return home to join his parents, six-year-old brother and 17-year-old sister. But on his way back, he found the streets crammed with people, police cars and ambulances. He asked one of the pedestrians what was going on, and was told that an apartment building had collapsed. It did not occur to him that it was the building where he and his family lived until he got closer and saw the pile of rubble that had been his home.

For this teenager, whose other close relatives all live in the US, the situation is indeed tragic. He is currently staying with a neighbour in a nearby building, who found him at the scene. "I could not leave him in the streets. What would have become of him?" said the neighbour, Mohamed Es-samreddin. "We've had calls from many officials expressing their concern, but we still don't know what Hadi's fate will be," added the wife.

For Hadi, all hope lies in the rescuers pulling his family out of the rubble — alive: "They will probably find them, at least my mother," he told *Al-Ahram Weekly*.

Edited by Wadie Kirolos

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JAGUAR
EGYPT

FOLLOWING King Hussein's arrival in Sharm Al-Sheikh on Tuesday, he was escorted by President Hosni Mubarak on a tour of the resort, which overlooks the Gulf of Aqaba. With Mubarak behind the wheel of the presidential limousine, the two leaders arrived at the InterContinental Hotel, where they had coffee and enjoyed the view. They shook hands with tourists and hotel guests and posed for photographers. At a news conference following their talk, Mubarak was asked about the nature of the discussion that took place in the car between him and the Jordanian monarch. "This is a secret which I am not prepared to divulge," Mubarak jokingly responded.



On the eve of a new session of parliament, Gamal Essam El-Din interviews Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kamal El-Shazli, and anticipates forthcoming debates

Agenda for reform



In the light of the cabinet's decisions, what are the main legislative measures that will be submitted to the People's Assembly in its new session?

It was clear from the first day that the new cabinet was formed under Dr Kamal El-Ganzouri that this government is committed to turning the directives and aspirations of President Mubarak into reality, speedily and urgently, by means of a well-defined timetable of plans and programmes. Foremost is the creation of the appropriate climate for raising productivity rates to the target set by President Mubarak, which is a minimum of eight per cent return on national investments. With the private and mixed sectors shouldering the major part of the task of achieving this rate, the public sector's responsibility will be confined to implementing strategic projects.

There is no doubt that a number of executive tools and measures are necessary in order to create a better climate for raising the volume of investments and, consequently, production. Foremost among them are: achieving stability, whether in terms of security or legislation; protecting investments and providing investors with the adequate and necessary guarantees while fighting monopolies and dumping practices; combating red tape and corruption; continuing to consolidate the infrastructure, ensuring that land is available for agricultural reclamation and the establishment of industrial communities, and protecting agricultural land. I think these are some of the basic factors for achieving an investment and production boom in Egypt.

Although the new cabinet is only a few months old, I can say, with complete honesty and objectivity, that the cabinet has moved quickly and accomplished much through a series of executive decisions, made within the limitations set by the Con-

stitution. As for legislation, that is the responsibility of the People's Assembly.

The government has prepared several draft laws which it will submit to the People's Assembly once the new session opens. Topping the list is a unified investment bill. This bill, which was the subject of extensive study, is aimed at fusing the legislation governing investments in Egypt into one comprehensive and clear-cut law that maintains existing investment incentives, and provides for and regulates additional ones. Besides, there will be anti-trust and anti-dumping laws to maintain productivity rates and encourage competition with the aim of improving quality.

The government is also expected to submit another package of draft laws aimed at protecting bank cheque transactions, encouraging exports and boosting exports. These will include a unified law for civil servants, amending some articles of the criminal procedure law to speed up court hearings, and amending articles of some laws in line with Constitutional Court rulings.

Opposition parties have been sharply attacking the current People's Assembly after the Court of Cassation passed a series of rulings invalidating the parliamentary membership of some deputies.

Don't you agree that there is a pressing need for the Assembly to reach some sort of understanding with the Court of Cassation on what constitutes valid membership, or invalid membership for that matter?

I believe that the subject of the decisions taken by the Court of Cassation on election appeals [filed by losing candidates] has been addressed from various angles, with the legal experts failing to reach agreement. In constitutional terms, however, it is certain that the People's Assembly alone has the prerogative of deciding whether the membership of a certain MP is valid or not, and that reports issued by the Court of Cassation, and the conclusions contained therein, have worth within the bounds of the papers and documents submitted to it.

Obviously, we cannot predict the decision which the Assembly's legislative committee will take after it examines the court reports submitted to it. The committee's decision is referred afterwards to the Assembly, at the beginning of each parliamentary session. All deputies, irrespective of their political backgrounds, have the right to discuss the policies, issues and priorities listed in this statement.

The opposition claims that NDP deputies failed to exercise effective supervision of the government, especially in privatisation and the sale of public sector companies. How do you respond to this charge?

It is well known that the control exercised by the People's Assembly over the government's performance has different forms, ranging from requests for information, questions, interpellations [questions that cabinet ministers must answer], to requests for debating a certain issue — which should be signed by 20 members.

In filing requests for information or debate, submitting questions and interpellations, NDP deputies act independently. They are not subject to guardianship or manipulation but are guided only by their national conscience and the fact that the government is the government of the majority NDP, which implements the NDP's programme as endorsed by its members. This applies to privatisation policies or any other policies contained in the government's policy statement, which it delivers at the beginning of each parliamentary session. All deputies, irrespective of their political backgrounds, have the right to discuss the policies, issues and priorities listed in this statement.

How do you evaluate the performance of the businessmen deputies in the last parliamentary session (1995-96) in view of charges by the leftist Tagammu Party

that they managed to impose business interests on the Assembly at the expense of the interests of workers and peasants?

I think that after the adoption of the multi-party system, and in light of the Political Parties law, which regulates political party activity in this country, it cannot be said that there is a party that defends workers, another which defends peasants, and a third which defends business. This is not acceptable any longer because projects depend on workers as much as they depend on businessmen. Capital is not enough to launch a project.

So it is not justified to assert that businessmen managed to impose their interests because national issues are integral — one texture — and so there can be no distinction between [the interests of] one citizen and another. On the contrary, I think that the businessmen enriched the Assembly with their views, derived from actual experience, which led to the removal of many obstacles in the way of investment and exports.

Municipal elections are scheduled for next spring. How is the NDP preparing for them?

The coming municipal elections will take a new form... They will be conducted according to the individual candidacy system instead of the state system. So, all parties, including the NDP, will do their best to nominate very popular candidates.

In the NDP, we have laid down specific requirements for our candidates: popularity, a good reputation, commitment to the party and devotion to work. Of course, NDP members of the dissolved municipal councils will be given a fair chance to run for re-election after their previous performance is evaluated. The NDP lists will also include young people and women.

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In the

'Pain, pain and more pain'



Sohayla Andraous in Oslo, sharing an intimate moment with her daughter, Layfa, before her long ordeal started

Has a conspiracy been hatched to make former Palestinian guerrilla Sohayla Andraous's life hell? Dina Ezat investigates the possible reasons behind her retrial in a hijacking case re-opened after 19 years

A high state security court in Hamburg, Germany, is expected to sentence a former Palestinian guerrilla, Sohayla Andraous, to life behind bars. The 46-year-old is facing charges of murdering the pilot of a Lufthansa airliner that she co-hijacked in the 1970s.

Andraous has pleaded not guilty, but her lawyers believe that she does not stand much of a chance of avoiding conviction. For her family, the whole episode is shrouded in ambiguities and sadness. "It is all so silly and so meaningless. This hijacking happened some 20 years ago. She was tried and she served her sentence. Why are they bringing it up again now?" said Ahmed Abu Matar, Andraous's husband. Speaking to *Al-Ahram Weekly*, in a telephone interview from Oslo, where Andraous and Abu Matar have lived since the early 1990s, Abu Matar denied that his wife was guilty of killing the Lufthansa pilot.

Andraous's case dates back to 1977 when, in collaboration with three other Palestinian guerrillas, she hijacked a Lufthansa plane flying from the Spanish island of Majorca. The hijackers forced the pilot to take the plane to Yemen and then to the Somali capital Mogadishu. They demanded the immediate and unconditional release of Palestinian political activists jailed in Israel and several European states, including Germany.

But in Mogadishu, the Somali government made a deal with its German counterpart by virtue of which the Somalis allowed a German special forces team to storm the plane. According to the terms of the deal, any surviving hijacker was to be the responsibility of the Somali government.

Andraous was the only survivor. "She survived the attack of the special forces team, but her body was almost riddled with its bullets," said Abu Matar. Following treatment in a Somali hospital, Andraous was tried by a Somali court and sentenced to 20 years behind bars. Andraous served 18 months before her poor health qualified her for a special pardon from former Somali President Siad Barre.

Once free, Andraous drifted between Beirut, Damascus and Cyprus before she finally settled down with her husband and daughter, now 10 years old, in Oslo.

In October 1994, Norwegian law enforcement agents arrested Andraous with the intention of extraditing her to Germany. She was eventually extradited last November after a year of debate on the legality of the action.

"They did it despite the fact that at two stages, two Norwegian courts of law found it unconstitutional to extradite Sohayla, who had asked for political asylum from the Oslo government," said Abu Matar. Katrin Rafi, second secretary at the Norwegian embassy in Cairo, commented: "The matter was debated in the press and there were voices opposed to the extradition."

Those who opposed the extradition criticised the Norwegian government for "violating the spirit of peace that at one point it helped broker between the Israelis and Palestinians," Abu Matar said, adding: "I do not understand it.

stand it. Sohayla was a soldier of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation. And the chairman of the PLO was granted a Nobel peace prize for consenting to peace. So why are they honouring the leadership at the same time as they are trying the soldiers?"

According to Rafi, the decision to extradite Andraous "was only a legal decision... It was a judiciary problem and the judiciary system made a point of not mixing politics with legal issues."

Abu Matar disagrees. "It is all political. The Germans have political interests in re-opening this long-closed file," he said. The theory of Andraous's lawyers is that the Germans want to use Andraous as a witness against someone from former East Germany who is currently facing charges of smuggling German-made weapons to Palestinian resistance fighters. "They have blatantly offered Sohayla a deal for her release in return for being a witness for the German prosecutor against this woman," he said. "But of course Sohayla refused because a political activist like her could never agree to such a cheap bargain." Meanwhile, Andraous has reportedly complained to her husband and lawyers that she has been "continuously subjected to insults and humiliation" in police custody in Germany.

After almost two decades, it is difficult for Andraous's lawyers to find witnesses to testify in her favour. The German government, on the other hand, finds it very easy to call any of the surviving passengers and have them tell their horror stories of being

on a hijacked plane. Diplomatic efforts were exerted by the Palestinian National Authority to pressure the Germans to release Andraous. "The peace process should dissuade us from re-opening closed files," commented Mahmoud Abbas, a key member of the PLO Executive Committee.

A committee headed by Yasser Abd-Rabbou, the Palestinian minister of culture, has launched a campaign of support for Andraous. "Retrying Andraous is an outright violation of all the rules and principles of the peace process," Abd-Rabbou said.

According to Liana Badri, coordinator of the support committee, the group sent a delegate to attend the hearings in the Hamburg court of law and contacted several diplomats and politicians in Germany. But "it all failed," Badri said.

Andraous has been driven to despair. In a letter to her husband, she asked him to tell her lawyers to drop the case because she cannot accept the fact that her friends and supporters are collecting money to help pay her lawyers' bills. Her friends, supporters and lawyers are determined to keep fighting.

The lawyers, pessimistic about a not-guilty verdict, are hoping to get the court to convict her of being an accessory to murder rather than of murder. This would mean a sentence of 15 years which they would plead she served in Norway or even at home because of her deteriorating health.

For Andraous it is all bleak. "It is the Palestinian destiny: pain, pain and more pain," she said.

CIA gets cracking

Contras and crack are a new tragedy for black America and the Third World, argues Jooneed Khan

Nearly a decade after the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) thought the firing, though inconclusive, Congressional and Special Prosecutor investigations had laid to rest the Iran-Contra file, a regional west coast newspaper, using a local, domestic angle, has brought the issue back to life with a vengeance.

Its premise is simple enough: the crack cocaine epidemic which exploded in California in the 1980s was fuelled by Nicaraguans linked to the CIA and in dire need of funds to finance and arm the Contras who were fighting to topple the then pro-Cuban Sandinista regime in Managua.

Focusing on the trial in San Diego of Ricky Donnell Ross, the *San Jose Mercury News* in August published a hard-hitting series headlined "Dark Alliance: The Story Behind the Crack Explosion" and written by reporter Gary Webb. Ross, aka Freeway Ricky, is an African-American high-school drop-out in his thirties who amassed a colossal fortune dealing in crack in the Los Angeles area and who faces life imprisonment for conspiring to sell cocaine to the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) in 1993.

"For the better part of a decade, a San Francisco Bay Area drug ring sold tons of cocaine to the Crips and Bloods street gangs of Los Angeles and funnelled millions in drug profits to a Latin American guerrilla army run by the CIA," said the investigative report in its lead paragraph on 18 August. "This drug network opened the first pipeline between Colombia's cocaine cartels and the black neighbourhoods of Los Angeles, a city now known as the crack capital of the world."

The lengthy series draws on declassified reports obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, federal court testimony, undercover tapes, court records in the US and abroad, hundreds of hours of interviews over the past year, and research done by two local reporters in Nicaragua.

According to the report, Ross's main supplier was one Oscar Danilo Blandon Reyes, scion of an elite Somoza-era Nicaraguan family ruined by the Sandinista's revolution, and a marketing graduate. He worked for a notorious drug dealer named Juan Norvin Meneses Cantarero and for Colonel Enrique Bermudez, the Somoza regime's liaison with the Pentagon who ran the Fuerza Democratica Nicaraguense (FDN), or Contras, from his base in Honduras.

Bermudez also coordinated with the Salvadoran air force to ship planeloads of cocaine from Colombia to the US, and more specifically to the Los Angeles area, where an ounce of cocaine cost \$100,000, actors and yuppie professionals up to \$5,200 — Smoking \$20-worth of "crack" could get African-American teenagers a 10-times greater high. The cocaine money went to buy arms for the Contras and local pushers got enough money to buy handguns and set up their own gangs.

"In Honduras, Mr Bermudez told us the end justifies the means. OK. So we started raising money for the Contra revolution," Blandon testified during Ross's trial in March. It was Blandon who helped the DEA entrap Ross in the cocaine scam last year, and he got a \$45,000 reward for his job. He now works for the DEA. As for Meneses, he has never spent a day in a US prison, even though records show that the federal government has been aware of his cocaine dealings since at least 1974, writes Gary Webb.

The network was active from 1981 to 1986, when President Ronald Reagan was committed to helping the Contras but could not get Congress to vote significant financial support for them. When Congress finally approved a \$100-million package for them in 1986, the network was downgraded and Ross was convicted and jailed for a short time in 1988. Blandon, Meneses, Bermudez and others in the network were working with the CIA, but Ross knew nothing about

this. "Shortly before Blandon took the stand in San Diego [last March] as a witness for the US Department of Justice [against Ross], federal prosecutors obtained a court order preventing defence lawyers from delving into his ties to the CIA," writes Webb. And he quotes Assistant US Attorney L J O'Neale, Blandon "will admit that he was a large-scale dealer in cocaine, and there is no additional benefit to any defendant to inquire as to the Central Intelligence Agency."

The mainstream national media, major newspapers and television networks ignored the exposé, but it has fingered and keeps growing on the Web page of the *San Jose Mercury News*, a 145-year-old daily based in California's Silicon Valley with an average daily circulation of 300,000 and which is part of the Knight-Ridder Group of 33 US dailies comprising the *Miami Herald* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*.

The Web page, maintained by a staff of 16 including nine editors and which is accessible at the address <http://www.sjmercury.com>, has kept the issue alive, giving it national and international exposure and igniting widespread indignation and anger within the African-American community, whose children are being increasingly devoured by the crack epidemic in the black ghettos nationwide.

"While the FDN's war is barely a memory today, black America is still dealing with its poisonous side effects. Urban neighbourhoods are grappling with legions of homeless crack addicts. Thousands of young black men are serving long prison sentences for selling cocaine. And the LA gangs, which used their enormous cocaine profits to arm themselves and spread crack across the country, are still thriving, turning entire blocks of major cities into occasional war zones," writes Webb, adding that there is also a "sentencing disparity"

Edited by Gamal Nkrumah

since "cocaine snorters get three months in jail while crack smokers get three years."

With just a few weeks to go before the November elections, the Black Congressional Caucus has jumped into the fray, organising angry meetings and demonstrations from Los Angeles to Washington. CIA chief John Deutch, who has admitted that "rogue elements" may have been involved but denied any CIA institutional role in this racket, has been directed by President Bill Clinton to order an internal inquiry, jointly with General Barry McCaffrey, the administration's new drug czar.

The African-American leadership is unimpressed, and California Democratic representative Maxine Waters wants a Congressional hearing. Black civil rights activist Dick Gregory, a former comedian, and a Washington radio talk-show host, Joe Madison, recently took

the whole "dark alliance" file to CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, to turn it over to Deutch. "We tied up the yellow police ribbon used around crime sites to make the point that we had identified the scene of the crime, that there are people here who have funded a war with the blood of our children," said Gregory.

They were arrested and jailed, but then quickly released after a demonstration drew 1,500 angry citizens. Pressure has also been building up on radio hotlines, and alarmed phone calls and e-mails to Congress. In the meantime, Judge Marilyn Huff, overriding objections from the prosecution, has postponed Ross's sentencing to allow defence lawyers time to obtain documentary proof of CIA links to Ross's crack dealings.

Belatedly, the mainstream national media has approached the story, but only indirectly. "All the major newspapers are doing stories about the story, but

none of them are going after their own story. Why? That's what I call a whitewash," Kobe Kwasi Harris, chair of Afro-American studies at San Jose University told the *Mercury News*. "If America had a choice they would choose a disorganized, criminal black community over an organised, radical one," he added.

Last week, the *Washington Post* published an analysis of the *Mercury News* series, saying "the available information does not support the conclusion that the CIA-backed Contras played a major role in the emergence of crack as a narcotic in widespread use across the United States." It accused the newspaper of implying, without alleging, a direct link between the CIA and the crack trafficking.

But the *Mercury News* story by its report, saying the basic allegation that people who were associated with the CIA trafficked in cocaine remained unchallenged. "The beauty of the series is that it clearly went that far and no further," said Jerry Ceppos, the executive director of *Mercury News*. What disturbs the CIA and the mainstream media is that the allegation strengthens long-held suspicions by blacks that such an enormous flow of drugs and weapons could only have been carried out under the protection, or with the connivance, of the US government.

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The writer is editor of US Black Engineer magazine, is the former editor of the Philadelphia Tribune, America's oldest black newspaper, and has been a commentator for the daily Philadelphia Inquirer and the Baltimore Sun.

The black vote

The US presidential race is a critical turning point for African Americans, argues Garland Thompson

Bill Clinton continues to hold an impressive lead over Republican Bob Dole after two nationally televised debates and a sharp encounter between their running mates, Vice-President Al Gore and Jack Kemp. Political analysts say there is little real difference between the positions of former Senator Dole and the president, but they are wrong.

The two men differ in a fundamental way, especially where African Americans, Latinos and other minorities are concerned. Clinton puts it this way: "Bob Dole is focused on the past; I am focused on the future." In a nutshell, it is focus on the past which so troubles African Americans.

It is only 30 years since the social rebellion of the 1960s, when blacks everywhere rose against racial subjugation and demanded their rightful place in American society. When Dole and the Republicans right speak of "returning" America to its "old, cherished" values, that sounds to African Americans like back to the bad old days of national insensitivity to the suffering of millions under the yoke of segregation in the pre-1960s South. When they talk that rhetoric up with congressional bills and lawsuits seeking an end to special efforts to bring racial minorities into the mainstream in education, employment and political access, arguing for a "colour-blind society" which has never existed here, it rings alarm bells all over Black America.

A small look at the progress brought about by those special efforts, under the umbrella of "Affirmative Action" carried out to effectuate the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and similar acts which followed it, shows what is at stake.

Census data tell the story. As of 1940, two-thirds of all African Americans were poor. Less than half had completed secondary education. Their population was concentrated in the American South, where segregation laws and a whole set of biased social norms confined them to the poorest housing, the poorest schools and the poorest-paying employment. Mob violence, terror bombings and Ku Klux Klan raids, often carried out with the tacit consent of local law enforcement, kept all African Americans, of whatever colour, fearful of challenging the system.

Then, in 1954, came the Supreme Court's *Brown v. Board of Education* striking down segregation law. In 1955, Martin Luther King launched the civil rights movement with a bus boycott. Blacks everywhere rose and demanded access to better schools, better jobs and a better political voice.

In less than 20 years, census data showed that African Americans turned the corner. Wide access to education, sparked by the protests and supported by new government aid programmes, moved blacks from below the poverty line into the middle class. The 1970 Census showed more than half of all blacks were no longer poor. By 1980, only a third of all African Americans were poor, and that holds for the 1990 Census. Some 15 per cent of all African Americans 25 years old and older — 1.5 million — are college graduates. Another 3 million completed one to three years of college, and 75 per cent of all African American children are completing secondary education. As the famous data book by Chicago-based Target Market News shows, African Americans now earn and spend more than \$300 billion dollars each year. That is a Gross Domestic Product bigger than most of the countries of the world.

That progress, lauded publicly by many, has become a target for right-wing whites, fearful of their place of privilege in this society. Loud calls for education, sparked by the protests and supported by new government aid programmes, moved blacks from below the poverty line into the middle class. The 1970 Census showed more than half of all blacks were no longer poor. By 1980, only a third of all African Americans were poor, and that holds for the 1990 Census. Some 15 per cent of all African Americans 25 years old and older — 1.5 million — are college graduates. Another 3 million completed one to three years of college, and 75 per cent of all African American children are completing secondary education. As the famous data book by Chicago-based Target Market News shows, African Americans now earn and spend more than \$300 billion dollars each year. That is a Gross Domestic Product bigger than most of the countries of the world.

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Bob Dole once was a somewhat liberal senator, who once strongly backed efforts to moderate the exclusions of the past, but over the last decade has changed his stance. Ronald Reagan's presidency brought right-wing policies across the board into the White House, and many congressional seats changed over to the right-wing with his election. Reagan stacked the federal courts with right-wingers, who began to turn back the clock on civil rights, refusing to enforce the Constitution and protect racial minorities against racial discrimination in a line of backward-looking decisions. George Bush, another former moderate, continued Reagan's policies and Reagan's approach to high court appointments.

The Congress, still led by moderate Democrats, rebuked the high court with the Civil Rights Act of 1990, overturning the work of those decisions. Bush vetoed the legislation, becoming the second president since the 19th century to veto civil rights law. Congress finally overcame his objections in 1991.

Bill Clinton threw the Republican right out of the White House in 1992, and now sits poised to replace a large number of federal judges about to retire. That includes expected Supreme Court vacancies. If Clinton does not win re-election, Dole will make those appointments. And Dole has already signed onto the right-wing agenda.

The stakes for African Americans are very clear, 100 years after the Supreme Court's infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision legitimising segregation in America: Either Bill Clinton wins, or a right-wing pol will control the courts, pushing the clock back yet again.

In the Congress, African Americans lost a major part of their clout when Newt Gingrich and the Republicans took over, because Congress passes bills by careful balancing acts. With right-wing Republicans in control of committee appointments, supported in their political pursuits by right-wing Democrats, the Congressional Black Caucus has lost its leverage over key legislative provisions. If the Democrats should regain power, the Blacks' seniority would bring leadership of 10 legislative committees and subcommittees.

That's pretty high stakes. Bill Clinton and Bob Dole may be fellow travellers in many ways, but the attachment of Dole to the worst of his political right's mean-spirited agenda means he cannot be a viable choice for African Americans, regardless of his call for a "new" civil rights agenda.

The writer is editor of US Black Engineer magazine, is the former editor of the Philadelphia Tribune, America's oldest black newspaper, and has been a commentator for the daily Philadelphia Inquirer and the Baltimore Sun.

Ghali calls anti-terrorist United Nations Security Council to a meeting to discuss global terrorism and the fight against it. He says the UN should take a strong stand against terrorism and support the US-led coalition against it. He also calls for a global ban on weapons of mass destruction and for a moratorium on nuclear testing. He also calls for a ban on chemical weapons and for a ban on biological weapons.

Florida race

RACE RIOTS rocked 5

Ghali calls for anti-terrorism pact

UNITED Nations Secretary-General Boutros Ghali has called for a binding international agreement that would commit states to steps aimed at ending global terrorism. Boutros Ghali said in a speech at America's Harvard University that countries must work together to place international restraints on terrorists.

Ghali said the UN can help bring states together in the fight and provide a legal framework for anti-terrorist measures. He warned that terrorists have sophisticated international alliances, communications and funding. They receive arms and training from governments which they have accords with and, therefore, leave them alone, he added.

Ghali said he was reviewing international conventions relating to terrorism — the international convention against hostage-taking, for example, and the international convention against offences committed on board aircraft. He said he would present his findings to the General Assembly. He added that he hoped to expand international agreements against arms trafficking and fund-raising and other activities in support of terrorists.

In his address to the General Assembly last month, US President Bill Clinton also appealed for international cooperation to fight terrorism.

Meanwhile, at the UN, the chairman of the Organisation of African Unity repeated African support for Boutros Ghali's re-election, which the US opposes. The secretary-general's official term ends on 31 December.

Florida race riots

RACE RIOTS rocked St Petersburg, Florida, last week after a white police officer shot and killed a black motorist. Scores of extra police with loudhailers ordered African American youth off the streets. Black youth resisted and paced the street corner where the black motorist was slain. At least 20 people were injured and 30 buildings burned. Over 30 people were arrested. At the height of the violence, 300 to 500 officers were deployed in the area, including those from two neighbouring counties and the highway patrol, said St Petersburg police spokeswoman Lilia Davia.

The United States Justice Department sent a conflict resolution team and began a preliminary inquiry into the riot. St Petersburg Mayor David Fischer called on the US Civil Rights Commission to evaluate the city's race relations.

St Petersburg basked in the limelight two weeks ago when it hosted the vice-presidential debate. Last week, streets on fire and angry blacks throwing rocks and bottles Intifada-style grabbed the headlines. St Petersburg, a retirement haven on the west coast of Florida, is home to 250,000 people. Roughly 20 per cent of its population are black and live in the impoverished South Side area.

Malta steers away from EU

MALTA'S opposition Labour Party, which has vowed to keep the tiny Mediterranean island nation out of the European Union, won last weekend's general election. According to the final tally released on Monday, the Labour Party defeated the conservative Nationalist Party by 7,633 votes out of an electorate of nearly 275,000.

Owing Prime Minister Eddie Fenech Adami, whose right-wing Nationalist Party ended 16 years of Labour Party rule in 1987, conceded defeat and asked head of state Ugo Mifsud Bonnici to name a new head of government. The voting was, in effect, a referendum on the international aspirations of the island: joining the EU or pursuing an independent course under a party that once forged close ties with Libya.

Alfred Sant, the leader of the Labour Party, opposes the push for Malta to become part of the world's largest trading bloc. His strategy was to appeal to voters' patriotism and pocketbooks. Sant claimed EU membership would cost the country its traditional neutrality and national character, and promised to repeal an unpopular 15 per cent tax on consumer goods. He has not offered an alternative revenue-raising plan nor indicated if he would seek to re-establish the socialist-style trade and military cooperation with Libya. Sant also wants to pull Malta out of the NATO-led Partnership for Peace framework. In the 1970s, Malta forced NATO to close its base and negotiated the removal of all British military facilities in the country.

Malta, a former British colony, has become Libya's lifeline to the outside world ever since the United Nations imposed an air travel ban in 1992 to force Libya to turn over two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan-Am jetliner. Ferries carry travellers and goods the mere 230km between Malta and Libya.



A child victim of the bloody ethnic conflict in the border region between Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire. Thousands of people have been displaced as a result of the war (photo: AFP)

Blood always tells

In Central Africa, too many neo-colonial cooks spoil the region's delicately balanced tribal broth, warns Gamal Nkrumah

What's cooking? A bloody stew, if you ask me. The situation in the border region between Burundi, Rwanda and Zaire is worsening hour by hour and it is increasingly difficult to tell who is fighting who, a Red Cross statement warned this week. The ferocity of the fighting is reminiscent of the horrific events that occurred in 1964-65, when 500,000 Zairians died, and in 1978, when Marxist-inspired groups under the umbrella of the Congolese National Movement took up arms against Zaire's central government. The groups confessed to being followers of nationalist leader Patrice Lumumba, who was brutally murdered by the lackeys of colonial forces in 1961.

The correlation between ethnic invasions between Francophone Walloons and Flemish-speakers in Belgium, the former colonial master of Zaire, Rwanda and Burundi, and ethnic clashes in Belgium's former colonies is hard to miss. Zaire has some 200,000 ethnic groups speaking some 500 different languages. The sprawling African nation, a veritable political power-leg, has 450 political parties. Zaire has had a bloody history of secessionist rebellions beginning with the notorious Moise Tshombe's abortive independence bid for the mineral-rich Katanga — now renamed Shaba — provinces, which generates 80 per cent of the country's gross domestic product. Their control of the sources of Africa's two longest rivers — the Nile and the Congo. They are a force to be reckoned with. The fate of the continent lies in their hands.

What does one do with Africa's 1,500 tribes? Is there actually such a thing as a tribe in contemporary Africa? Ethnic groups are fragmented by class, creed and political affiliation. Yet tribesmen are bundled together by an arbitrary tag which actually has no place in reality. It is said that Africa cannot forge a purposeful consensus and that African tribal factions cannot overcome their rivalries. The much maligned concept of nation-building in the 1960s was a winning formula.

Today, there is no clear sense of citizenship in much of Africa. The Banyamulenge are ethnic Tutsi who, originally from Rwanda, moved to eastern Zaire 200 years ago. Hutu refugees, numbering some 1.2 million, who fled Rwanda and Burundi and took refuge in Zaire, resent the Banyamulenge and are trying to remove them from Uvira, South Kivu province, eastern Zaire. Today, the Banyamulenge are fighting the Zairean army and joining Zairean opposition forces. Zaire threatens to

withdraw their citizenship and expel them. Yet Zaire is only 36 years old.

A conversation that took place a couple of years ago springs to mind. "Kwanda's Defence Minister Paul Kagame, the country's actual strongman, is a Tutsi you know. Blood always tells. You can tell by his real bearing and his aquiline features," a fellow reporter told me as the Kenya Airways plane we had boarded an hour earlier in Nairobi was grounded on the tarmac at Kigali's international airport on the outskirts of the Rwandan capital because of a technical fault.

Europeans — mainly Belgian, German and French — leaving the war-torn country filed past carrying a few personal belongings. "They are fleeing this bleeding land," he said, shaking his head. "The ethnic Tutsi are Africa's Jews." Reason didn't entirely mask the derision in his tone. "Are the Tutsi Africa's Jews or its Nazis? Perhaps, they are Africa's Zionists," I ventured. The governments of both Rwanda and Burundi are dominated by the mainly Tutsi military establishment in the two countries.

Today, the Tutsi control Rwanda and Burundi and might soon overrun eastern Zaire. They have a close working relationship and blood ties with Uganda's rulers. They control the sources of Africa's two longest rivers — the Nile and the Congo. They are a force to be reckoned with. The fate of the continent lies in their hands.

As preparations for the millennium become more frenzied, we are reminded that ethnic conflict is gaining currency among disparate African nations. Tribalism in Africa is portrayed as if it is a reason for the continent's backwardness when it is the manifestation of a continent in transition. Africa is exercising its innate democratic, voodoo-style, in a last-ditch attempt to deal with declassifying social conditions. That's the way the cookie crumbles on the continent.

Paul Kagame is no smooth talker; he is a rough fighter. Rwanda's President Pasteur Bizimungu is a very different man. He is a model of civility. He is an ethnic Hutu who heads a predominantly Hutu government that champions the rights of the ethnic Tutsi — half a million of whom were slaughtered by Hutu chauvinists in 1994. In an interview with Bizimungu last year, I was struck by the impartiality of his public persona, which was instrumental in uniting his war-torn nation under a multi-ethnic coalition government. The disparity between Bi-

zimungu and Kagame is bewildering.

The ghoulish fascination of the international media with the brutality of ethnic conflicts on the continent is also perplexing. Terror found its way to the small screen last week. The scenes on television are full of clichés of primal terror such as wild, hungry and angry eyes; perhaps, even ritual slaughter and the washing of spears in blood. Violence is riding roughshod over national boundaries. The African nation state is itself bedevilled by the quest for legitimacy. The people live in anguish.

Bloody score-settling wars are rife. In Rwanda's genocidal civil war of 1994, Hutu extremists backed by Zaire massacred over 500,000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu before the Tutsi-led Rwandan Patriotic Front seized power in Rwanda. The scale of the exodus of Hutu refugees is frightening. The National Council for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD), the main Hutu Burundian refugee organisation, is unable to cope. United Nations attempts to organise a 20-day emergency food airlift into the area have been foiled because of the violence. The CNDD and other Hutu organisations want to destabilise Rwanda and Burundi, the Rwandan Patriotic Front warned.

The office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in Nairobi put the number of displaced persons at over 500,000. The London-based International Institute of Strategic Studies has dismissed the Zairean army's fighting capabilities. The institute said in a statement issued this week that the Zairean army is ill-equipped and unable to patrol and secure the country's borders. The Banyamulenge's People's Democratic Alliance has allied itself with three Zairean leftist forces: the Popular Revolution Party, the Revolutionary Movement for the Liberation of the Congo and the National Resistance Council for Democracy. According to the institute, the People's Democratic Alliance has some 50,000 fighting men.

Democracy is not necessarily the harbinger of peace and political stability. Burundi's 1993 elections were widely acclaimed as a model of democratic transition. A couple of months ago, the Tutsi-dominated Burundian military usurped power, ousting the democratically elected civilian administration. External actors were not irrelevant. Rwanda and Uganda had a hand in the coup, making it all the more unnerving to Zaire and Kenya — the two main sympathisers of Hutu extremists. France, too, was unhappy. Hutu leaders who mas-

terminded the Tutsi massacres in Rwanda are hunted down. Colonel Théodore Sindika and entrepreneur Augustin Bugrimbutra were murdered in Nairobi recently. The Rally for the Return of the Refugees and Democracy in Rwanda, a Hutu organisation, bitterly protested. Last week, European Union special envoy Aldo Ajello travelled to the Great Lakes region of Africa to take the issue up with Rwanda's and Burundi's leaders.

Zaire has registered a formal protest with the UN Security Council, accusing Rwanda and Burundi of infringing upon its territorial integrity. The country is in danger of disintegration. Secessionist activities in the snow-capped mountains of eastern Zaire are just the tip of the iceberg. Zairean President Mobutu Sese Seko is in Switzerland recuperating after an operation for prostate cancer. His virulent anti-communist crusade elicited the approval of Western powers, who turned a blind eye to the kleptocratic culture that took Zaire by storm.

Analyses of African calamities are invariably premised on the argument that Africans cannot rule themselves. Are democracy and development projects that Africa cannot undertake without outside help? "Peace can only return to the region through negotiation — in the framework of an international conference," said French Cooperation Minister Jacques Godfrain. German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel recalled Germany's ambassadors in Kinshasa, Kigali and Bujumbura, telling reporters in Bonn that Germany was doing "all that can be done to ease this dangerous situation." America's permanent representative to the UN, Madeleine Albright, is pressing for an international conference to stop the killing. For once, UN Secretary-General Boutros Ghali agrees with her. The two want serious preparations before they go ahead with convening the conference.

Africans are clutching at straws. The Maastricht conference of the Global Coalition for Africa in November 1995 was followed this week by a conference in the Burkina Faso capital Ouagadougou. The coalition is a consortium of American, European and Japanese politicians and businessmen and multinational conglomerates with interests in Africa. Again Africa was condemned to democracy. In some quarters, that appears as a life sentence of sorts. Donors pushed for tight conditions for the setting of key policy instruments. Again Africa is forced to make bricks without straw.

The lesson of Dearborn

James Zogby draws a moral from the story of a city in Michigan, where Arab Americans organised themselves politically

In 1985 Mike Guido first ran for mayor of Dearborn, Michigan, a city of 100,000 people, 20,000 of whom are Arab. As part of his campaign, Guido mailed to every home in Dearborn a pamphlet entitled "Let's talk about the Arab problem." In the pamphlet Guido depicted the large number of Arabs who were moving into Dearborn. He described them as threatening "our neighbourhoods, the value of our property and our darned good way of life." Using scare tactics about Arabs was Guido's way of winning votes.

I went to Dearborn in the midst of that crisis to do work with the community. Our analysis was simple: Arab Americans in Dearborn were vulnerable to attack because they were weak and unorganised. With only 1,100 registered voters, they were easy prey. I said then that, with our community comprising 20 per cent of the population of Dearborn, we were not the "problem" of Dearborn, but "the promise of its future." It was our responsibility to transform ourselves into that promise. During the next 10 years we registered voters and mobilised community participation in politics. Today, thousands more Arab Americans are voters, hold public office and form a strong bloc in both the Democratic and Republican parties in Dearborn and Michigan, and are among that city and state's most respected citizens.

So it was no surprise that when the Arab-American Institute held its annual national leadership conference in Dearborn on 20-21 October 1996 — the first such conference outside of Washington — Mayor Mike Guido came to our banquet to deliver a warm welcome to his Arab-

American friends. What has happened in the intervening 10 years? The Arab American community has grown in stature and the mayor, quite simply, can count votes. It has become important in Michigan to take the Arab American voters seriously.

Guido's appearance was but an example of the new Arab American role in politics in evidence at the conference. The conference, "Decision '96: The Arab American Vote," was designed to focus attention on the importance of Arab Americans in both Michigan and Ohio. A statewide political rally had been held in Cleveland, Ohio, the night before the Dearborn conference. Both states are home to large Arab American communities.

The policy discussions at the Arab American Institute conference were equally noteworthy. While significant attention was given to the issues of Palestine, Lebanon and US-Arab relations, there was substantial discussion about a number of domestic policy concerns. So intense was the discussion on immigrant rights that one observer commented, "I remember when we couldn't get Arab Americans to discuss domestic issues at our conferences; all they wanted to talk about was the Middle East. Now we can't get people to focus on the Middle East." But that, too, was a sign of progress.

Before the conference actually began, a meeting of Palestinian American leaders was held in a nearby hotel to publicly endorse President Bill Clinton. Campaign officials on hand to receive the endorsement thanked the Palestinian leaders and pledged that the president would continue to back the Israeli-Palestinian peace accords. The

next day's newspapers featured a bold headline: "Palestinian leaders turn to Democrats — Clinton gets backing in Dearborn." In another endorsement announcement, a group of Lebanese American businessmen presented the Clinton campaign with their backing for the president's re-election. It, too, was received with appreciation.

Both cases were a far cry from 1988 when the Democratic presidential nominee, Michael Dukakis, actually rejected Arab American endorsement. In 1984 when the Democratic nominee, Walter Mondale, returned donations from some Arab American contributors. Once again, a clear example of the progress being made by Arab Americans in the political mainstream.

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Arab Americans have definite concerns about Middle East issues and, as a recent poll shows, there is a deep community consensus in support of the peace process, Palestinian statehood and Lebanon's sovereignty. What is new is that Arab Americans today have become articulate defenders of their domestic policy concerns, while

their community leaders are often to be found in the forefront of the national debate on these questions. This represents growth and maturity and political sophistication.

What the Michigan conference made clear is that Arab Americans have crossed the threshold into the US political mainstream. Arab Americans who have laboured for years trying to get inside, must now shake off old complexes and recognise new responsibilities and opportunities. This does not mean that there are no problems plaguing Arab Americans — in a democracy every group must continue to remain vigilant, to defend its rights and to insist on fairness. We Arab Americans still have powerful foes who seek to weaken us and exclude us, but we also now have powerful allies who will defend us and whom we must now also support.

The lesson we have learned is that complaining and protesting, while useful in some instances, are limited in effectiveness. Organising oneself and registering to vote and mobilising that vote, on the other hand, can produce real victories. They can break down barriers and build a community's stature. What we must do now is continue to intensify our effort on this path and build on the experience of Dearborn's Arab Americans.

What the past decade has taught us is that political respect is hard won. It requires dedicated and committed community activists and a focus on electoral politics. On this path we not only earn the recognition we deserve, but we achieve the access that will advance our community's concerns as well.

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Council call: come and get it

Among the several items on the agenda of last July's meeting of the Presidents' Council in Washington with President Hosni Mubarak and US Vice-President Al Gore, was the presentation of projects at the third Middle East/North African economic conference (MENA III). Over the following three months, council members worked in earnest to put together a package which would highlight the strides taken to reform Egypt's economy and to introduce new forms of cooperation in line with the growing trend for an integrated global economy. As a result, 13 well-documented, fairly large scale projects were produced by the council's New Business Opportunities Task Force.

A set of tough criteria, including a minimum of \$10 million in capital and incentives for investors, were set as a prerequisite for participation. Egyptians and Americans worked together to prepare the projects, and some disagreements emerged, revolving around whether the projects were big enough for the 12-14 November conference in Cairo.

"I think we have a very good package," said Ibrahim Hussein, secretary-general of the Presidents' Council. Hussein believes that the MENA III in Cairo will be more business oriented than the previous two MENA conferences, which were held in Casablanca and Amman, even though "chanc-

The Presidents' Council will present 13 high-profile projects at MENA III. Nevine Khalil takes a close look at their preparations

es for tremendous success have been dampened" because of the current tension surrounding the peace process.

The intransigent policies adopted by the new right-wing government in Israel, headed by Binyamin Netanyahu, dampened hopes for a fruitful and productive business conference, to such an extent, that Cain appeared to be contemplating cancelling or postponing the conference. For its own part, the Presidents' Council was divided over what would be more beneficial for Egypt — holding the conference on time or not. "Keeping Egypt's interest in mind, the council decided that politics will take second seat to economic concerns," stated Hussein. President Mubarak, he added, was "a very good listener" to the council's opinion, which focused on "Egypt first".

To a certain degree, the apprehension stemming from the political turmoil has been circumvented, in part because of MENA III's significance to Egypt. When Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri took office in January, recalled Hussein, he stressed his desire that the conference be "a celebration of Egypt's achievements and economic reforms". Since then, the government, with input from the coun-

cil, worked to reform its economic policy and the pertinent legislation. Hussein said that progress on the part of both the Egyptian and American members of the council has been "impressive".

The business community now realises that the government's role during MENA III will be, said Hussein, "to assist, promote and encourage Egyptian businesses to make contacts at the conference." The Presidents' Council will present two types of projects during MENA III: three finalised projects to showcase Egypt's economic progress which need an occasion for ceremonial signing, and another 10 which are still looking for investors.

Showcase projects include the aluminium foil and packaging project, which is an example of the numerous joint-venture opportunities available in Egypt, both with the public and private sectors. The project aims to use semi-finished aluminium products by Misr Aluminium Smelter to locally assemble dredges used to remove the silt clogging the Nile and irrigation canals. The project will also enhance TERSANA's chances as a candidate for privatisation.

A second project ready to be signed is the Locomotive Manufacture Project, where Egypt's state-owned rail manufacturer will establish a private-sector joint-venture enterprise for the man-

ufacture of locomotives domestically. SEMAF, a public-sector company manufacturing rail vehicles, will own about 25 per cent of the equity in a company to be controlled by the US electronics and defence contracting giant, General Electric.

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The plant to the EEA. Also in the field of energy is a mega-project for a Gulf of Suez petrochemical facility, which will be realised at an estimated cost of \$1.5 billion. Egypt's Ministry of Petroleum is planning to install a large petrochemical manufacturing complex and seeks as its partner a major multinational in the same field.

The council also offers two projects within the framework of Egypt's Technology Development Programme, which is concerned with supporting private-sector high-technology industries. The first project in this area is for \$80 million high-tech business incubators. The second is a water processing foundry, the cost of which is estimated at \$315 million. This project will be instrumental in boosting the microelectronics industry in Egypt.

In the sector of tourism, the council will offer a project which makes use of Egypt's tourism potential, especially in coastal resorts such as the Red Sea resort of Sharm El-Sheikh. The complex in Sharm El-Sheikh will cover an area of 1,000 acres, with sea front development stretching out for four kilometres, and will cost \$63.9 million.

"We need to show we are more than talk," Hussein said. "The message to the outside world is come and get it, with the early bird getting the most."

The road from Casablanca

Mona Qassem, reviewing previous Middle East economic conferences and their outcomes, argues that to date, it is Israel which has gained the most

The idea of organising an economic conference between the parties involved in the Middle East peace process dates back to 1993, when Shimon Peres, Israel's prime minister at the time, published a book entitled *The New Middle East*.

In the book, Peres discusses a new vision of the regional order, one in which the spectrum of cooperation would include economic and security issues, as well as water, tourism and refugees.

For Israel, the objectives of conferences such as MENA III were clearly laid out during the 1994 Casablanca summit. Israel, it became clear, wanted to convince Arab and foreign investors to channel their capital into the Middle East. The primary focus of this drive was to attract Arab investments, preferably in the form of joint projects. With this aim in mind, Israel found it necessary to work to normalise economic and cultural relations with the Arab countries while simultaneously reinforcing its concept of Israeli "security" and "sophistry".

Egypt's objectives during the Casablanca conference, however, were to focus on a comprehensive and peaceful settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict. From the Egyptian perspective, this meant that regional cooperation could not be got off the ground without a full and just peace between Israel and its Arab neighbours.

Among the recommendations presented at the Casablanca conference were the establishment of the Middle East Regional Development Bank and the Middle East Travel and Tourism Association (MENTTA), both of which are currently under way. Another recommendation was for the establishment of a regional chamber of commerce and a re-

gional business council. The latter, however, has encountered some obstacles that have impeded its formation. A fourth recommendation was to reinforce the principles of partnership and cooperation between the private sector and the governments of the region.

The most significant outcome of the conference was the acknowledgement of the new regional role Israel would be expected to play in the Arab world.

The next economic conference, which was held in Amman in 1995, witnessed several crises. Prior to it the Syrian poet Nizar Qabbani published a poem entitled, "The Scouring Ous", in which he criticised those Arabs who hastened to make generous offers and propose economic agreements with Israel before any resolution was reached on the Palestinian Occupied Territories, the Golan and South Lebanon. He was, in effect, arguing that the economic pressure which could have been used as leverage to force Israel to withdraw from the Golan and South Lebanon, vanished into thin air thanks to the Arabs themselves.

On this issue, Egypt advised caution — the belief being that speeding up economic normalisation was not desirable, at least until the question of Israel's occupation of Arab territories was resolved. Jordan, on the other hand, favoured securing the maximum possible economic gain out of the peace it had recently signed with Israel.

Ironically, while Jordan's King Hussein was commenting that Egypt was the first Arab country to rush into peace with Israel, he was ignoring the fact that Jordan had turned a blind eye to the late Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's pre-Amman conference declaration that Jerusalem was the eternal

and undivided capital of Israel. The US supported this declaration, and the Congress approved the transfer of the US Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem no later than 1999.

Although this policy was in flagrant violation of Security Council resolutions which declare that Jerusalem is part of the occupied Arab territories, the US and Israel embraced their stance wholeheartedly, fully confident that any Arab reaction would be futile.

This tension was evident during the Amman conference, which ultimately served to reflect the discord in the positions of the various Arab nations. Some countries, such as Jordan and a few of the Gulf states, adopted the view that the time was right to cash in on the economic gains to be had, as a way of recouping some of the losses from war and foreign occupation. Others, however, remained steadfast in their conviction that economic cooperation should complement the peace process, and not be used to pressure any Arab state to yield to arbitrary Israeli demands.

But political turmoil aside, several projects grew out of the Amman conference, such projects included one for the "Red Sea Riviera", near Ras Banas which brought together Egypt, Israel and Jordan, and a freeze-zone project on the Egyptian-Israeli border. But, most of these projects were more beneficial to Israel than to its Arab partners.

Projects whose outcome would promote the development of Arab economies, such as Egypt's proposed agricultural projects, Palestinian infrastructural projects and Jordanian Dead Sea mineral projects, however, had not made headway.

The disappointing results of these projects

were underscored by the fact that Amman's sole achievement was the establishment of a regional bank, the regional tourist agency and the business council.

The Middle East Regional Development Bank project was the one product of Amman that brought to the foreground a great number of contradictions. While the bank's capital, at first, was set at \$25 billion, it was gradually reduced to \$5 billion. To date, however, only \$1.25 billion has been agreed upon.

The industrialised European nations should have transferred 60 per cent of the original \$5 billion, but Germany, and later the European Union, rejected the idea of contributing to the establishment of a bank they believed would be a US-controlled political pawn. Europe's opposition to the idea of the bank began to gather momentum during the evening session of the first day of the conference.

During a press conference, France's Minister of Industry Yves Gallian, said that France would not take part in this project and that it was waiting for the next regional economic conference when it would evaluate how well the project had fared.

Meanwhile, Gunter Richrodt, the German minister of economy, emphasised that this bank was, to put it simply, an unrealistic project and was an example of the US "showing off". The bank, he said, would not live long.

To compound matters, the remaining 40 per cent, which was to be raised by the Gulf states, was not forthcoming. Saudi Arabia rejected the idea of the bank due to the existence of other Arab banks and funds which can be expanded to provide the same ser-

vices as those of the proposed bank. Moreover, Saudi Arabia, as a result of the Gulf War, was shouldering a sizable debt at the time. Following Saudi Arabia's lead, the other Gulf states, with the exception of Qatar, objected to the bank's fixed system and demanded an extension of soft loans with lower interest rates.

In practice, this bank will not differ from other commercial banks and, as a result, its mechanisms will serve Arab-Israeli joint ventures. Moreover, the US's aim behind this bank is quite clear: namely to bring an end to the Arab boycott of Israel and normalise relations between the two sides.

Conditions for the bank's establishment stipulated that all transactions be undertaken only with the private sector. This stipulation would, in turn, strengthen the position of the Israeli private sector which is already stronger than its Arab counterparts. It would also allow the Israeli private sector to impose its full control on the markets. And Israel, suffering as a result of the Arab boycott, would, after the establishment of the bank, have access to Arab financial resources.

Arguably, one can conclude that the main outcome of the Amman conference was the redistribution of Arab wealth between the Arabs and Israel. This was accomplished through redirecting Arab resources to develop the Israeli economy by financing projects presented by Israel to the conference.

During this conference, Israel's agenda revolved around a form of economic cooperation independent of the peace process. It proposed a total of 162 projects valued at \$25.3 billion. Egypt, on the other hand, presented 85 large-scale investment enterprises valued at LE255 billion (\$7.35 billion).

The Israeli project blueprint was composed of 260 pages, including proposals for regional cooperation projects within the framework of the Mediterranean countries, as well as graphs, maps and the anticipated costs of these projects.

The portfolio also included research on the current economic conditions of the countries expected to join the new regional order as envisaged by Israel. The document specified that the final aim of the Amman conference, was primarily establishing a regional grouping of Mediterranean countries with a common market and an elected central authority similar to that of the European Economic Community (EEC). In order to realise this objective, Israel recommended that bilateral and multi-lateral projects in the fields of desert research and desalination should be undertaken. Major international financial institutions would implement ventures requiring huge capital, under the supervision of the countries concerned.

The final stage of realising its objective will be the formation of the new regional order and the gradual development of its official institutions. One of the important points raised by Israel, in this context, is the reduction of the region's military expenditure by one-third or one-half, in order to save \$20 billion annually and to finance projects in the new regional order.

It was suggested that the oil-producing countries of the Gulf also contribute one per cent of their oil revenue for the same purpose, as well as for the establishment of the Middle East bank. The Israeli plan, however, stressed that these moves would not affect international oil prices.

Market report

Back on track

Reform for reform's sake

FOLLOWING a four-week lull, the capital market got a much-needed boost, with its index gaining 1.35 points to close at 234.02 for the week ending 24 October. To a great extent, the rebound is due to the overcoming of glitches in the new clearing and settlement system that was installed nearly one month ago. The Capital Market Authority's chairman, Abd-el-Hamid Ibrahim, announced last week that all the previously-suspended transactions were successfully completed.

In the manufacturing sector, shares of the

Alexandria Portland Cement Company gained LE49.25 to close at 472, while those of the Middle and West Delta Mills company inched up by LE3 to close at LE55.5. Shares of the South Cairo and Giza Mills and Bakeries gained LE1 to level off at LE52.5, while trading in shares of the Upper Egypt Mills Company accounted for 14.07 per cent of total trading. While 321,965 shares of the company changed hands, they nonetheless closed at LE106.25, LE2.75 lower than their opening price.

Other manufacturing sector companies re-

alised sizable gains in terms of their share value. Shares of the Madinat Nasr Housing and Development bank gained LE29.5 per share to close at LE185, while those of the Helipolis Housing and Development Company gained LE22.15 to close at LE133.75. Recording a 50 per cent increase, shares of the Salama Housing and Contractors Company closed at LE15, while those of the Cairo Housing and Development Company lost 13.76 per cent of their opening value to close at LE12.

The financial and real estate sector's index

fared well during the week, gaining 6.78 points to close at 297.01 mainly as a result of an increase in the share value of 10 of the sector's companies. Shares of the Nationale Societe Generale Bank gained LE60 per share to close at LE568. The Credit International Bank was the market's shining star for the week, trading LE26.9 million in shares for a total of 18.07 per cent of total market turnover.

In all, the shares of 26 companies increased in value, 28 decreased and 32 remained unchanged.

Environment-friendly grant

TWO EGYPTIAN-German agreements were recently signed in Cairo between five Egyptian commercial banks, the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) and the German Bank for Reconstruction and Development (KfW). The two agreements stipulate that Germany will provide Egypt with a DM56 million (roughly LE123 million) grant in an effort to promote financial cooperation between the two countries.

The bulk of the grant, nearly DM50 million, will be invested in the purchase of environmental protection equipment, pollution-prevention projects and industrial waste treatment plants for public sector factories. The rest of the grant money will go to the EEAA for the financing of expenses, studies and consultations related to the main project.

Edited by Ghada Ragab

Suez 56
La fin des grands empires
Football
Zamalek et Moqadous, coup double
Rédacteur en Chef
Exécutif
Mohamed Salmawy

Président
et Rédacteur en Chef
Ibrahim Nafie

مكتبة من الأصل

Al-Ahram: A Diwan of contemporary life

At precisely 2.35am on Friday 15 June 1901, the era of *Al-Ahram's* founding generation drew to a close. At this point in its long history, *Al-Ahram* had almost completed its first quarter of a century since it first appeared on 5 August 1876. Thus on the threshold of its silver jubilee, Bichara Tagla passed away, nine years after his brother and co-founder, Salm Tagla, who died on 8 August 1892.

Although it was Salm who had taken the initiative in founding *Al-Ahram*, we believe that of the two founders, Bichara was the more important. This is not merely a question of titles, Bichara having been awarded the rank of pasha while Salm had only attained the rank of Bek. There were many other reasons for Bichara's greater importance.

To begin with, Bichara had been present in a position of responsibility throughout this entire period in the newspaper's life, an opportunity that divine will had deprived his brother from. Thus, Bichara had served the newspaper in partnership with his brother and afterwards in his individual capacity.

Very early on in *Al-Ahram's* career, an article published in 1878 about the plight of the Egyptian peasant incurred the wrath of the Khedive Ismail, and it was Bichara who paid the price. He spent three days in prison until he was rescued by the French consul-general, while his brother had fled the wrath of the Khedive by seeking asylum in the Russian consulate.

The newspaper almost met an untimely death on another occasion. This was three years later in 1882 with the outbreak of the Orabi revolution when the amalgam between the Orabi revolutionaries and *Al-Ahram* became too heated for the Tagla brothers. They decided to suspend publication temporarily, close their offices and head back to Lebanon. After the bombing of Alexandria and the withdrawal of the rebels, the Khedive Tawfiq, barricaded in safety behind the British fleet, invited them back.

It was Bichara who accepted the risk of returning to the smoldering port to resume publication of *Al-Ahram*, which at first consisted of one page which he wrote by himself as he met with the khedive and cooked his own food. It was only after the Orabi rebels had been finally defeated that Salm returned to Alexandria to rejoin his brothers and resume publication of the newspaper in its original full form.

Bichara, from the outset, was the more dynamic of the two brothers. While Salm focused on the more run-of-the-mill administrative concerns as well as his editorial column, entitled "A Glimpse", Bichara pursued schemes for the newspaper's enhancement and expansion. It was his idea to publish a daily supplement to *Al-Ahram*. The supplement, named *Echo*, began publication on 9 September 1876, a timing which opened the door for the stock exchange to subscribe to *Al-Ahram*. The daily coverage of the stock market in turn attracted, not only more subscribers, but advertisements which have continued to pump new life into the newspaper until today.

Also, beginning in January 1877, Bichara introduced a service unknown in the Egyptian press before that date. This, as was reported in the newspaper's obituary of its owner and editor-in-chief on the day of his death, was "to translate the wire-releases and distribute them to the newspaper's subscribers twice a day, in the morning and in the evening. The press stayed in operation day and night in order to keep our readers informed of the latest news, hour by hour."

Bichara was also the instigator of some of the newspaper's own investigative reporting abroad. It was his initiative to undertake tours of European capitals to provide first-hand coverage of some of the most crucial political events. His published obituary said: "In 1884, he travelled to London in order to attend the conference concerning the solution of the Egyptian question. He was tireless in his efforts to meet with ministers, ambassadors and delegates for the sake of the Egyptian cause."

These European tours, which appear to

1 5 3



If you sense that a word you might write will cause a person to lose a piastre, even if it will reap thousands for *Al-Ahram*, do not write it," Bichara Tagla, *Al-Ahram's* co-founder and editor-in-chief told a group of reporters. He spoke shortly before he died in 1901, the year of the newspaper's silver jubilee. Bichara pioneered many innovations, including a twice-daily foreign news update for subscribers and the establishment of a French-language twin for the Arabic *Al-Ahram*. In this instalment of his *Diwan* chronicles, Dr Yunan

Labib Rizq tells how instrumental Bichara was in laying the foundations of what is today the Arab world's largest and most prestigious press establishment.

have been undertaken periodically, were to affect his personal life as much as that of *Al-Ahram's* readers. Indeed, it was on one such tour that he met his future wife. His engagement took place on 15 June 1889 and he died on 15 June 1901."

Egyptian public opinion clearly considered Bichara's European tour as a service to the nation. Upon his return from his 1884 tour at the height of negotiations on the Egyptian question, a delegation from the State Legislative Council called at the offices of *Al-Ahram* to present to Bichara Tagla a gold watch upon which had been inscribed, "*Al-Ahram* — a national emblem". The watch was accompanied by a letter in which the parliamentary members expressed their gratitude for the services Bichara Tagla performed for the nation through *Al-Ahram*.

It was in his capacity as owner and editor-in-chief of *Al-Ahram* that Bichara Tagla won his titles, first bek, and then pasha. These were conferred on him directly by the Supreme Porte in Istanbul. It was no arduous task for Bichara to assume the ad-

ministration and editorship of the newspaper in the wake of his brother's death in 1892. Indeed, the transition was quite smooth in that it marked only a second phase of the newspaper's founding, towards which Bichara had made the largest contribution.

Al-Ahram's continued success had much to do with the way in which Bichara Tagla responded to the many changes Egypt underwent during the last decade of the 19th century. The most significant development in terms of Egyptian history was the evident intention of the British to prolong their occupation, at the same time the succession of Abbas II as the khedive at the outset of that decade inspired a growing spirit of anti-British resistance. In the on-going conflict between the khedival palace and the headquarters of the British High Commissioner, the country's newspapers constituted one of the protagonists' major instruments. There was no middle ground. Bichara had to choose sides and he opted for the nationalist camp championed by the young khedive.

Al-Ahram under Bichara thus waged sev-

eral battles against the British, focusing primarily on two areas of British policy: the occupation's attempt to consolidate its control over the Egyptian government administration and the expedition to conquer Sudan to establish British control over that sprawling territory at Egypt's expense.

In terms of the administration of the newspaper, *Al-Ahram* saw two major turning points that would effect its life as a national institution. The first, we believe, was fundamental to the newspaper's longevity; the second was instrumental in establishing a tradition that continues until today.

The first turning point occurred in November 1899. This date marks the move of *Al-Ahram's* headquarters from Alexandria to Cairo. This was not merely to be closer to the pulse of events in the capital. Bichara, in taking this decision, must have determined that the future well-being of the newspaper depended on its being totally Egyptian in character. By moving from Alexandria, its birthplace, to Cairo, the editor-in-chief severed the last remaining ties with his original homeland in Lebanon.

As for the second turning point, this was the publication of *Al-Ahram's* first non-Arabic newspaper. With the inauguration of *La Pyramide*, Bichara began to direct the operations of two newspapers, sealing the precedent which the *Al-Ahram* institution continues to follow today...

Directly or indirectly, the newspapers that featured obituaries of Bichara Tagla, regardless of their political positions, agreed on two points. The first was that he had demonstrated a reverence for his profession that was rare among those engaged in this field. The second was that *Al-Ahram* had made Bichara a very wealthy man. Bichara, as most of the newspapers that commemorated him agreed, was a scrupulous manager of his newspaper's finances. Money would not be squandered, but it would be fumigated, and generously when possible, into the essentials: renovating the printing presses, hiring correspondents in Egypt and abroad, and investigative tours

The author is a professor of history and head of Al-Ahram History Studies Centre.

NBE to finance Chevening grants

IN LINE WITH its pivotal role in encouraging higher education in Egypt, an agreement has been signed between the National Bank of Egypt, the British Embassy and the British Cultural Centre which will grant scholarships for study at the masters' level at British universities.

NBE will fund £2500 of the total £15,000 scholarship, covering tuition for one year, residential fees, expenses and travel tickets.

The granting authority has agreed to limit the subject of the masters' degree to banking, in order to develop the capability of employees in this field. The bank will participate in the selection process along with the British Cultural Centre.

High turnout for Systems 96

THE GENERAL manager of Munich Exhibitions, Joachim Enßlin, said that more than 1731 telecommunications and information technology/computers took part in the Systems 96 exhibition, which was held 21-25 October. Ten thousand visitors visited the exhibition, one of the most widely-known exhibitions in Europe.

Visitor and participant turnout to the seminars and panels were high. Ernst Kick, manager of Systems 96, said that the exhibition was one of the most successful exhibitions organised in Europe, where it is a meeting place for many professionals in the area of communications and information technology. Nearly 75 per cent

of the decision-makers attend Systems to learn about the latest technological developments in the field.

Systems 97 will be held from 27-31 October and will focus on providing solutions for communication problems.

Enßlin said that the new exhibitions authority will be inaugurated in 1998, which

(l-r) Otto Wiesheu, minister of telecommunications and transport, Bavaria, and his wife; Karoly Lotz, minister of transport and telecommunications, and his wife and Manfred Watzelseder, chairman of the board of Munich Exhibitions, during the opening celebrations for Systems 96.

Al-Ahram's exhibit at Systems 96.

Joachim Enßlin, general manager of Munich Exhibitions.

Ernst Kick, manager of Systems 96

will allow many international exhibitions to be held.

For more information on Systems 97, contact Mrs. Heba Azar from the German Chamber of Commerce at 341300214.

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Meridien Sharm El-Sheikh:

Fruits of Saudi-Egyptian investment

A management contract for the Meridien of Sharm El-Sheikh, was signed by Saudi investor Sobhi Al-Khodari and his partners representing Tirana Tourism Investment and the representative of Meridien International, Gerald Lawless, managing director of Forte/Meridien Hotels Middle East.

Al-Khodari, general manager of the project, said that the hotel is situated overlooking Tiran Island, the most beautiful site in the area. In choosing the site, special consideration was given to Meridien International due to the fine reputation it enjoys.



The hotel includes 265 rooms exclusively designed and fully equipped with panoramic terraces, in addition to 20 villas consisting of 2 floors which includes 3 bedrooms, a reception room, dining room, 3 bathrooms, a kitchenette and a terrace with a total area of 200m. The hotel includes a diving centre and conference and convention facilities.

The hotel is located 5km from Neama Bay and 2km from Sharm El-Sheikh airport. The hotel will open in 1998 with the luxurious sophisticated refinement of Le Meridien French style to be part of the largest tourism-oriented zone in Egypt.

Egyptian-Chinese Bank approved

The Egyptian-Chinese Committee held in Beijing from 24-29 October discussed the establishment of an Egyptian-Chinese bank that's expected to boost trade and eliminate obstacles related to financing between the two countries, said Rushdi Sakr, head of the International Committee of Exhibitions and Markets.

Sakr added that the Chinese side agreed in principle on establishing the bank which will play a prominent role in increasing transactions between Egyptian and Chinese companies. He concluded his statement saying that the Egyptian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce will discuss means of increasing trade between the two countries.

Trade with China

AHMED Guwell, minister of trade, met with Chinese Prime Minister Jiang Zemin, who hailed the ongoing progress achieved in the economic field. Zemin stated that he is looking forward to meeting Egyptian Prime Minister Kamal El-Ganzouri to discuss means of upgrading commercial exchange.

During his meeting with the Chinese prime minister, Guwell reviewed the works of the Egyptian Chinese Committee and the consultations made with Chinese ministers. At the heart of the discussion was the economic reform programme in Egypt which has borne fruits in bringing down inflation and increasing foreign currency.

These measures encouraged indebted countries to write off \$4 billion, which testifies to the seriousness of economic reform in Egypt.

Guwell stated in a press conference in Beijing that the possibility of transferring Chinese technology to Egypt was being examined through cooperation in the fields of petrochemicals, textiles, pharmaceuticals and fertilisers.

Guwell also stated that the conference centre in Nasr City is an example of Chinese-Egyptian cooperation, which can be seen in the financial and technical assistance it provides Egypt.

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Boot camps

With US Middle East envoy Dennis Ross now back in Washington after three weeks of mediation between Palestinians and Israelis on the seemingly mythical Hebron troop redeployment, US officials remain optimistic that the issue will be resolved within a month.

But for 12-year-old Helmi Shawash, who lies in his grave after "allegedly" being pistol whipped by a Jewish settler, optimism is no longer an option. Helmi, and more likely than not, his sister who has leukemia, have discovered the hard way that when it comes to boorish savagery and an absolute disregard for the value of human life and dignity, few can match wits with the roughly 400 extremist settlers residing in Hebron, and their erstwhile leader-of-sorts, Benjamin Netanyahu.

While Netanyahu is quick to accuse the Palestinians of dragging out the issue, his fellow right-wingers are mustering up the courage to defend themselves against other 12-year-olds who may be wielding stones. And yet, Netanyahu is concerned about their safety. So much so, in fact, that Israeli troops once again fired tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds at crowds of stone-throwing Palestinian youths mourning the death of a child.

While tragic, Helmi's death is unsurprisingly representative of the hypocritical tone and text the peace process has assumed over the last few months. Arguing that he is not bound to agreements reached by the previous Labour government, Netanyahu has approved the construction of another 8,200 settlement homes for Jews. His explanation was that it was a move approved by the previous administration, had been frozen. Other examples of this brand of hypocrisy abound.

The most striking idiosyncrasy of this duplicity is that Israelis are blind to the fact that it is occurring. They speak of the value of human life based on their Holocaust experience, and yet the latest fashion craze in the country are Nazi-style boots. In this light, one is forced to wonder what kind of boots Helmi's killer was wearing when he stepped on the child's throat. And, what kind of boots will Netanyahu be wearing when he takes that final, decisive step onto the heart of the peace process.

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On course and moving ahead

Recent indicators paint a rosy picture of Egypt's economic prospects which the third Middle East/North Africa Economic Conference will only enhance, writes Ibrahim Nafie



of the total, a clear demonstration of increased international confidence in Egypt as one of the fastest developing financial markets.

The government is keen to increase levels of investment in the Egyptian economy both domestically, regionally and internationally. To facilitate an enhanced climate for investment customs and taxation procedures have been streamlined. The government is also planning further reforms. Its legislative programme includes investment incentives which, in addition to preserving incentives already in place will be expanded to encourage new investments away from the Nile Valley. The proposed law for investment incentives — the unified investment law, as it has been termed — will also contain performance-related incentives conditional on achieving certain targets in specified areas, e.g. exports. The law will also include provisions to allow preferential treatment to be accorded to labour intensive projects or projects likely to involve significant technological transfers.

The proposed law thus represents a continuation of policies concerned not just with the narrow parameters of finance, but which seek to encourage comprehensive development.

Can we honestly expect that Egypt will sacrifice the possibility of a brighter and more economically secure future for its people just to play into the hands of those who would like to see Egypt founder in the economic crises of its past, leaving it prey to pressures from abroad? Egypt's comprehensive and strategic vision, which has already resulted in a series of positive steps forward backed by solid indicators, are proof enough of Egypt's determination to progress in the face of machinations from some quarters to derail that advance. Egypt knows that only when it is politically, militarily and economically strong and independent will it be able to protect the just and lasting peace that is in the interests of all people in the region.

Given its past achievement in the field of economic reform, the time has come for Egypt to focus on the future. And all the indications are in place that that future will be a brighter time for Egyptians, indeed for all Arabs.

Egypt has entered a period of unprecedented stability. After five years of continuous reform the economy is well placed for expansion. The budget deficit has been dramatically reduced to one per cent of GDP, as opposed to 20 per cent at the beginning of the eighties. At the same time the annual rate of inflation has dropped to less than eight per cent, while the exchange rate has been stable for four years despite the deregulation of markets. The balance of current transactions produced a surplus of \$630 million in 1994-1995, exceeding IMF predictions. Foreign currency reserves have reached \$18.5 billion, which covers import costs for one and a half years, the highest reserve-import ratio in the developing world.

Such economic indicators will prove a great incentive to investors. What we need now, though, is to furnish investors with the best possible environment.

Investment will underpin economic growth which, over the next few years should exceed eight per cent.

In the past Egypt has been hampered by a paucity of domestic savings to finance the investment necessary to stimulate growth. Hence the importance of the conference which will provide an important shop window in which to display Egypt's unsurpassed advantages to the foreign investor.

Up till now direct foreign investments have been limited. Of the \$90 billion of direct investment in the developing world last year the Middle East and North Africa attracted barely \$2 billion. But the successful implementation by the Prime Minister El-Ganzouri of policies conducive to growth will prove of great help in attracting an increased share of direct investment.

The success of the privatisation programme is already reflected in the increased volume of trade on the stock market. In July transactions involving foreign investors accounted for almost 69 per cent

of the total, a clear demonstration of increased international confidence in Egypt as one of the fastest developing financial markets.

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On selective boycott

Arguing that the indiscriminate Arab boycott of all Israelis can prove to be counter-productive with Netanyahu in power, Mohamed Sid-Ahmed proposes an alternative strategy

For many years Dr Latif El-Zayat, who recently passed away, headed the Egyptian Committee in Defence of Pan-Arab Culture, a group of intellectuals firmly opposed to Zionism and to the normalisation of relations with Israel. In rigorously maintaining an uncompromising stand on the issue, the committee's members were certainly acting from the highest motives. But rigour in such matters can sometimes be closer to ethics and metaphysics than to politics, which is aptly described as the "art of the possible", or, alternatively, as "the least bad option". And that is where I came to differ with them. These differences came to a head during a debate organised by the Committee last week at the Journalists' Syndicate, which was attended by a wide spectrum of opposition forces.

Accordingly, peace has no established definition in the specific conditions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Arbitrary formulas have been devised, such as the "land-for-peace" formula, now generally attributed to Security Council Resolution 242. However, it is not clear what is meant by land here. Is it the land lying within the borders established in the 1947 UN partition plan, within the pre-'48 war boundaries or within the wider borders which resulted from Israel's "withdrawal from territories" and not from the territories it occupied in '67? Nor, for that matter, is it clear what is meant by peace. Are we talking about a simple armistice along the lines of that which prevailed after '48, or a "peace" without diplomatic relations as before '67, or with full normalisation, as now required?

Despite the global attention lavished on the search for a peaceful solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict, particularly after the Madrid conference, all it has produced so far is the freezing of one contradiction, namely the one between Israel as a state on one hand, and the Arab states on the other, while all other contradictions, instead of being eliminated, have been displaced into the ranks of Israeli society and Arab societies respectively. In the case of Israel, this displacement found its most dramatic expression in Rabin's assassination by an ultra-right-wing fanatic, and is further confirmed by the victory of Netanyahu's brand of extremism over Peres' more moderate line. However, thanks to its democratic institutions, Israel has been relatively successful in managing, if not altogether overcoming, its inner contradictions. This has not been the case in the Arab world, where peace has ended up transforming the main contradiction in the Middle East from confrontation between Arabs and Israelis into acute conflict within Arab ranks. Significantly, all agreements signed by Arab negotiators with Israel have been signed behind the backs of their fellow negotiating teams.

As matters now stand, the weakest link in Israel's armour since Netanyahu assumed power is in the political set-up within Israel itself, where less than 51 per cent of the electorate supports his ruling right-wing coalition. Successive Israeli governments have been very successful in playing on inter-Arab contradictions, but because the Arab parties tend to see the Zionist state as a monolithic whole, making no distinction between its different political trends, they hold back from playing on the often sharp divisions between those trends.

The time has come for Arab intellectuals to realize that as long as they continue to adopt an indiscriminate boycott strategy, extremists like Netanyahu will continue to enjoy the support of the majority of Israelis. For peace to become irreversible in the long run, commitments by governments alone are not enough. Netanyahu will invoke the boycott by the Arab intelligentsia to support his argument that peace is no more than an armistice, a "cold peace" made necessary only by the Arabs' inability to wage a "hot war".

One way of depriving Netanyahu of the support of a majority of Israelis would be to "reward" those of his countrymen who advocate peace — on lines acceptable to the Arab parties — and "punish" those who obstruct it. Such a selective boycott, as it were, will require difficult decisions on both sides. Israeli peace forces will have to accept not only the creation of a sovereign Palestinian state — which they already do — but also that its capital be in Jerusalem, that withdrawal from the Golan and Syria's understanding of the land-for-peace trade-off, that Israel abandons its nuclear option, that it withdraws from South Lebanon etc. Arab popular forces will also have to make difficult decisions, such as limiting the boycott to anti-peace Israelis, thus signaling that normalisation of relations is possible once ambiguities in the land-for-peace formula are removed. It goes without saying that the boycott should become selective only after Israeli peace forces openly commit themselves to upholding these Arab demands.

The danger here is that a selective boycott could encourage forces in the Arab world with a vested interest in doing business with the Israelis to push for a total lifting of the boycott. To avert this danger, criteria for dealing with Israelis will have to be established. I believe a national conference should be convened to debate how such a strategy can be implemented. In this domain, transparency, openness and accountability, in a word, *glasnost*, are indispensable to avoid entrapment and blackmail that could defeat the purpose of the strategy I propose.

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Close up

Salama A. Salama

The trade in innocence

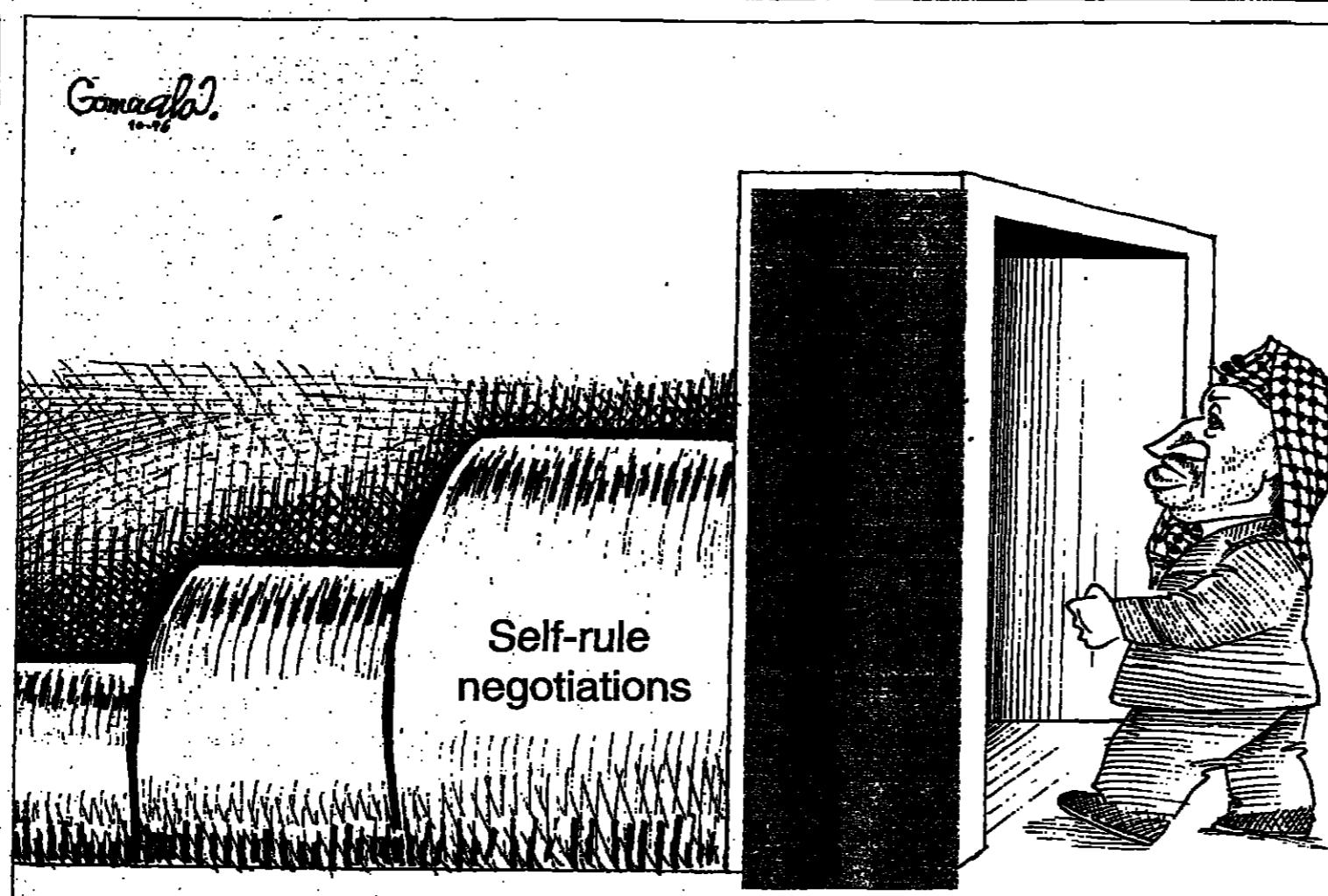
Trading in children for sexual purposes has reached unprecedented levels, and in Europe is attracting a great deal of press coverage. Those who follow European newscasts on television cannot fail to be horrified by the harrowing reports of the sexual abuse of minors. The latest such crime, which sent shock waves well beyond national borders, concerned the discovery of the bodies of two children in a quiet Belgian town. The children, it transpired, were victims of a well-organized ring of child abusers.

Originally the trade in children was carried out under the respectable banner of wealthy but childless European and American couples adopting children of poor Asian or Latin American families. It quickly expanded, though, to procuring children for sexual purposes, and the trade rapidly became enmeshed with organised prostitution and international drug dealing.

The vast majority of the clientele making use of this criminal network are European men who seek their pleasure abroad; most commonly in Asia and Latin America. Under the guise of travel agencies, specialising in tours of extremely poor countries which either have no child protection legislation or which do not enforce the legislation which is in place, such people arrange to arrange itineraries the sole purpose of which is to allow them to exploit the young and defenceless. Nor are there any statistics to register the number of victims of this trade, though in countries such as Brazil, Thailand and the Philippines the numbers of children forcibly involved in the sex trade could reach tens, if not hundreds, of thousands.

International conventions, ratified by the UN, generally address themselves to safeguarding children's rights to education and healthcare, and to protecting children from forced labour, usually in agricultural production or industrial projects. And while the rich industrial nations bring ever more pressure to bear on poorer developing nations — threatening them with GATT agreements to oblige them to stop using under-age labour regardless of traditional social and economic customs within the family or tribal units — they have yet to formulate adequate deterrents capable of protecting children from sexual exploitation. It is now a matter of urgency that this issue be addressed. The conference that will be convened in Sweden offers perhaps the best platform for hammering out the required legislation.

And while religious and social norms may go some way towards protecting children from sexual abuse in the Arab world, this gives no reason for complacency. This matter cannot be neglected.



Self-rule negotiations

A three per cent solution

The facts are, writes **Edward Said**, that neither Israel nor the US has the slightest desire to foster a peace process that guarantees Palestinian self-determination or independent statehood. So what is left to be done?

Two principal themes in Arab and Palestinian discourse emerged during and after the recent crisis over the provocatively opened Jerusalem tunnel. One was the need to rally round the Palestinian National Authority in its time of crisis with Netanyahu. The second was the even greater urgency of returning to the signed peace documents between the PLO and Israel.

Both are understandable reactions to a serious sense of great crisis and consternation. For without the Oslo Accords the Palestinian Authority would lose a great deal of its international legitimacy, as well as its internal coherence. Besides, it is natural in a time of what seems to have been a moment of extra arrogance by Israel, and after Palestinian lives had been lost, to speak passionately about laying down differences, setting aside inter-Palestinian quarrels, dropping all partisan politics in the interest of the common welfare. A former Democratic Front military leader, now living in Ramallah after a prolonged residence in Tunis, vented the thought that it was almost immoral of intellectuals at this time to say anything that might be deemed contrary to the accepted consensus, especially after Palestinian martyrs had fallen in the national cause.

White I understand and to some extent sympathise with some of this, I must also say that I remain unconvinced by this whole line of reasoning. Certainly unity is a good thing, as is maintaining pressure on the Israelis, whose shameless and contemptible attitudes to Arabs and Palestinians have been the bane of the Middle East for five generations. But I cannot accept the thesis that we must all plunge ourselves heedlessly into the seething emotional turbulence of the present, without a thought or lacking any clear ideas about why we are in this terrible state to begin with.

The condition of Arab and Palestinian politics today is desperate not because of an excess, but because of a poverty of reason and responsibility. Is it the intellectual's duty simply to become a member of the chorus, or is it more valuable to stand aside (which implies not detachment but, I think, a greater commitment to the common good) and reflect without undue emotion on why we are here, and how we can move forward? The answer for me is clear: critical thought is much more useful now than flag-waving, which I have always thought is one of the cheapest political tactics ever invented.

In its 14 October issue the influential American weekly magazine, *The New Yorker*, published a very long account of the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations in light of the impasse caused by Netanyahu's policies. The author is Connie Bruck, someone who has never before written about the Middle East, but whose work furnished readers with one of the most complete and intimate descriptions of what has been taking place. Yet it is also perfectly clear that despite her access to the substantial number of influential Palestinians whom she quotes (Abu Mazen, Abu Alaa who is her central source, Nabil Shaath, Mahmoud Darwish, Nasser Al-Qidwa, Hassan Asfour, among others) some of whom were directly involved in the negotiations with Israel, Bruck seems to be an ideological Labour Zionist. Throughout her article she gives one example af-

ter another — some of which I shall describe below — how Peres literally cheated and bullied his Palestinian interlocutors, leaving them in the end with a pathetic patchwork of tiny autonomous regions that, she says, added up only to about three per cent of the land.

Yet she concludes her article by praising Rabin and Peres and Uri Savim, with whom she reports Abu Alaa established a "mystical" bond, as men of principle and courage. The Labour leaders, she said, had a "moral commitment" which nevertheless "extracted a concession after concession from the Palestinians, unquestionably overpowering them". Then in total contradiction with her own account she adds that the Israelis "did not see the Palestinians as a lesser order of being", whereas everything she talks about suggests that they did. "They did not see them as unequal subjects for whom some small, spotty parcel... of their homeland should suffice," which is exactly what the Israelis did give the Palestinians, and exactly how they did (and continue) to see them.

I mention all this about Bruck in order first of all to show that even when confronted with evidence of their own research and selection, supporters of Israel can override that evidence and conclude that some Zionists are fine people, with a moral commitment. I recall feeling the same way when I first read Benny Morris's important book on the birth of the Palestinian refugee problem, in which Morris — also a liberal Israeli — gives example after example of the concerted Zionist plan to drive out the Palestinians in 1948. Yet he too concludes, inexplicably, that there was no real plan, only a series of incidents that were the results of a general war.

But that as it may, Bruck's *New Yorker* article is important not because of its peculiar conclusions but because this is the first non-Arab and non-Palestinian account of the process from the American and Israeli point of view that confirms what I, and many other critics of the process, have been saying. The article deserves translation into Arabic for its details and accuracy, though here I can only give two or three examples of how the future of Palestine was negotiated. Bruck tells us that, according to Arafat's aides, the Palestinian leader probably never read the agreements, relying on his assistants (who gave him a "rosy picture" of the contents) or on a quick reading of the headings. Abu Mazen told Bruck that for several months after the Washington ceremonies Arafat did not realise that he was not getting a state, only autonomy. Furthermore, Arafat regularly intervened in the negotiations, making it easier for the Israelis to get concessions from him which his own people had already refused: the Norwegians were useful in this, and I must say, they emerge from Bruck's account as manipulative and slippery, as well as unreasonably pro-Israel in what they did.

The Israeli plan, as formulated by the great Peres, was to "remake and transform" Arafat into a partner for the Israelis, so that he could make historically unacceptable concessions to them and remain as an instrument for implementing their schemes. Before the negotiations began in earnest an Israeli-American lawyer with years of international experience had

drafted the agreement in sixteen drafts; for their part, however, the Palestinians had done nothing. Bruck describes their woeful lack of preparation, their various cults of personality, and the duplicity of which they were victims at the expense of their people of course.

The worst deception by the Israelis was in Oslo. Two. Both sides had agreed not only on a schedule of re-deployment, but also on what percentage of the land held by Israel would be conceded to the Palestinians. The coordination of timetables and percentages over a period of several months gave the process a semblance of success for the Palestinians; although they began by getting autonomy in the main cities — 3 per cent of the whole — according to the schedule-percentage plan they would be getting about 70 per cent (some thought it was 80 per cent) of the West Bank. When the documents were drafted and ready for signature, Bruck says that the percentages had been eliminated unilaterally. But the furious Palestinians were forced to sign anyway. This meant that if Netanyahu wants "to go back" to the implementation of Oslo he can withdraw six inches and say he had exchanged land for peace. The fact, therefore, is that Peres, Berlin, Savir and company had bamboozled the Palestinians, all the while posturing as serious men of peace when in fact they had treated the Palestinians as untutored savages who were entitled to the half a plot that Bruck unaccountably says was not to be their destiny!

It is essential to insist that Bruck writes as someone in favour of the peace process, by no means as a critic or opponent. She too longs for the days of Peres and his group, which is to say that they were plausibly ripping off the Palestinians, while the ruffian Netanyahu, who has more or less the same thing in mind, is less presentable, more embarrassing for supporters of Israel.

In view of the current crisis, therefore, it seems quite evident that a good deal of responsibility for the horrors of what the Palestinian people now endure at the hands of Israel is due to the negotiators, with Mr Arafat at the top. This leadership produced the hideous map of many Bantustans, they agreed to the settlements, they did not prepare, they lied (Bruck says that Arafat "always lied"), they accepted the plan without real timetables and percentages, they made the concessions, they in effect connived with the Israelis to put forth what in reality was a travesty of peace, in which Palestinians got very little except the autonomy regime and the dubious privileges of running municipal affairs. Real power has remained in the hands of the Israelis: sovereignty, entrances and exits, security, Jerusalem, settlements, roads, water, 97 per cent of the West Bank.

To return to Oslo, which has been the central plea in official Palestinian discourse, is therefore to go back to the very situation that produced the mess we are in right now. During the 1921 Anglo-Irish negotiations, when Britain was the most powerful country in the world, the Irish resistance leaders Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera always said that their ultimate strength in dealing with the British was their people and their power of refusal.

Is it not right at this juncture to refuse merely to reiterate the well-known formulae about national unity, while more of Palestine is conceded unwisely, and without broad popular participation? I agree we face a national emergency, but over four million Palestinians exist outside of Palestine: why are their needs and concerns never taken into account? Why are Palestinians in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and the Gulf never consulted?

Inside Palestine there is a rule of autocracy in which people are afraid to speak, in which the press is controlled, and in which only authorised opinion is permitted. To say, as Mr Ahmed Khalidi famously claimed in a recent article, that it is irresponsible to ask for democracy in Palestine now, since we must wait for 15 years before we can begin to think of democratic practices, is the rankest idiocy. As we give up more and more of ourselves to the Authority, letting Arafat do what he wishes without any check or accountability on his power to use his bloated security services, we are being as bad as any autocratic third world state. And we do not even have a state. How can we repeat the tragic course of most of the Arab countries, in which national unity and a state of permanent emergency have been used as a cover for sustained dictatorship, corruption and mediocrity, plus more and more losses to Israel?

The facts are that neither Israel nor the US has the slightest desire to foster a peace process that guarantees Palestinian self-determination or independent statehood. These are the plain facts, as even superficial scrutiny of the various peace arrangements between the PLO and Israel will immediately attest. The time for illusions and falsehoods is now over. Palestinian blood has been spilled in the cause of an agreement which is designed specifically to keep Palestinians under the perpetual domination of the Israelis. We have not hurt the Israelis, we have not defeated them in anything: why then do we expect that they will respect us, or as the official Palestinian mind keeps hoping, do we delude ourselves into believing that they will give us something? To depend on the US for anything more than wresting further concessions out of us is, in my opinion, utter delusion. We must learn to live in a reality that we create by our own efforts, and we must stop waiting for some external savior to appear and fix everything for us.

I have been criticised for not offering alternatives, being too negative etc. But everything I write is premised on the idea that what we have before us is a bad alternative, and that it needs changing. To expect me, or any single individual, to provide ready-made, easy solutions is part of the same ideological deformation that causes us at this late date to sit around waiting for a savior in the US or France or Russia. The only way forward is as a people, with all of us challenging those who have given away Palestine in a fit of distraction; we must speak out; we must hold meetings; we must ask questions as loudly and as publicly as possible. There are four alternatives already. And someone must finally be held to account for the loss via Oslo of what is left of Palestine. Alternative number five.

On the whole Egypt has come a long way in escaping the regulatory imbalances that used to dominate economic activities. There remains, however, an unfinished policy agenda, as recognised by policy makers. Hence the significance of recent steps to strengthen the dialogue with the private sector, accelerate the privatisation programme, progress further with the rationalisation of investment incentives and procedures and continue with tax reform, including the improvement of tax administration. With further progress in these areas, Egypt can look forward to higher rates of investment, employment and growth.

The writer is deputy director of the Middle Eastern Department at the International Monetary Fund. The views expressed here are his own and do not necessarily reflect those of the IMF.

Soapbox

Showcase for Egypt

MENA III — should it go ahead? This question has been asked repeatedly. My view has always been the same. Yes it should go ahead, for the simple reason that it is in the best interest of Egypt as well as the Arabs.

For 20 years Egypt has paid the price for peace and should now reap its harvest. The economic summit is, after all, an investment bazaar. Those Middle East and North African countries participating will be doing so in an attempt to attract potential investors. It is, therefore, the perfect forum for Egypt to promote its considerable and growing attractions to investors.

Egypt's economic reforms have resulted in low inflation, a modest budget deficit, and a strong balance of payments and reserve situation. MENA III will afford an opportunity to further capitalise on these successes. The potential of its market base will not be lost on investors, nor will the availability of a well-educated labour force. In addition, Egypt has abundant water and energy resources. Its rich industrial base allows for the implementation of complementary industrial projects. Egypt's industrial structure is much less specialised than that of Israel, which — though it is always presented as the supposed winner in regional economics — can claim supremacy in only a few industrial fields, namely electronics, arms and diamond cutting.

Most international trade and transport networks will have to start and/or pass through Egypt. Already the Suez Canal and the Sumed line provide important North-South trade axes. And as peace prevails Egypt will also find itself at the centre of the East-West Africa-Asia axis.

So let us hold the November summit on time, the better to display the advantages of investing in Egypt.



Ali A. Soliman

The right regulatory balance: key to productivity

Regulatory reforms are viewed by many as a prerequisite of increased productivity in the private sector. Mohamed A El-Erian examines some of the lessons to be gleaned from recent international experiences

What guidelines are in place for regulatory reforms undertaken in the context of structural reform programmes? Do regulatory reforms simply imply deregulation? How does one strike the balance between over-regulation and under-regulation?

These and similar questions are on the minds of policy makers everywhere — in industrial and developing countries alike — as they seek to implement policies aimed at encouraging private sector investment, employment creation and production. Fortunately, we now possess sufficient international experience to help answer such questions and to provide insights into Egypt's own performance.

Regulatory reforms in industrial and developing countries have been guided by a simple but important principle: reforms should target a more investor-friendly regulatory environment. This implies clear regulations that are insulated, as much as possible, from ad hoc and discretionary implementation and a reduction in the red tape that businesses face in dealing with various regulatory agencies, leaving them more time to devote to genuine production, investment and employment decisions.

To be credible and effective, regulatory changes must also be viewed as fair. They should not discriminate in favour of certain groups — typically state-owned enterprises and the large and entrenched private sector firms.

The success of regulatory reforms then can be measured in

the degree of reassurance felt by domestic and foreign investors that they are operating, and will continue to operate, within a transparent and predictable framework where procedures are implemented fairly and systematically.

Regulatory reform, therefore, is not synonymous with deregulation. Rather, it means striking the right balance between the over-regulation and under-regulation of various sectors and activities or, as economists are fond of saying, between correcting for market failure and correcting for government failure.

Deregulation in certain areas must therefore be accompanied by regulatory strengthening in other areas, generally those characterised by market failures and by the need to provide an enabling environment for the proper functioning of competitive markets, which implies government action to prevent collusion and monopoly; to protect consumers, detect insider trading and ensure prudent regulation and supervision of financial markets.

Not surprisingly, regulatory reform has been especially important in the context of privatisation and liberalisation efforts. Simply put, it is important to ensure that natural monopolies and former government monopolies do not abuse their market power when transferred to the private sector.

While stressing the importance of regulatory reforms, one should not have unrealistic expectations about the immediacy

of the benefits. They take time to materialise. New Zealand is often cited as a classic example. The very fundamental reforms undertaken in the 1980s bore significant fruit only in the 1990s, when the New Zealand economy emerged as one of the world's top performers.

It is also important to recognise that regulatory reforms are not easy. Vested interests have a way of resisting and fighting back. What is needed, therefore, is a comprehensive programme guided by a clear vision, commanding political will and skilled and responsive enforcement.

Finally, regulatory reforms are not just a government thing. They involve the whole of society and must benefit from the input of the private sector. The private sector must also contribute in promoting, among its own ranks, the right type of self-regulation.

Where does Egypt stand in terms of some of these simple considerations? An economist cannot fail but notice the important changes that have taken place in recent years in the regulatory environment impacting on key economic activities.

Egypt now has transparent interest rates and foreign exchange markets which have been instrumental in stabilising the economy, reducing inflation and building up a strong foreign exchange cushion — all of which strengthen the environment for investment. The external payments system has been

liberalised, the investment approval and registration process simplified, and sectors previously off-bounds have been opened up to private participation.

These steps are all consistent with the right kind of deregulation. Egypt has also exerted efforts to strike the right balance with regard to regulation. The regulatory regime governing the financial sector has been strengthened through the many steps taken by the Central Bank of Egypt and, more recently, the Capital Market Authority.

On the whole Egypt has come a long way in escaping the regulatory imbalances that used to dominate economic activities. There remains, however, an unfinished policy agenda, as recognised by policy makers. Hence the significance of recent steps to strengthen the dialogue with the private sector, accelerate the privatisation programme, progress further with the rationalisation of investment incentives and procedures and continue with tax reform, including the improvement of tax administration. With further progress in these areas, Egypt can look forward to higher rates of investment, employment and growth.

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Speaking many tongues?

Understanding Arabic, ed Alaa El-Gibali; AUC Press, Cairo, 1996

Fifteen scholars, many of them well-known experts in linguistics, have — under the editorship of Professor Alaa El-Gibali — synthesised, criticised, and extended our understanding of Arabic in a volume that is, appropriately enough, dedicated to Professor El-Said Badawi.

"In Badawi," writes the editor of the present volume, "we have an Arab — motives indisputably genuine, ties to the classical heritage unrelenting and intimate, and proficiently trained in modern linguistics — who concedes the actuality and bona fide theoretical status of the colloquial varieties, the true native tongues of the Arab people."

The main thesis of the book is that it was never true that Arabic had been unchanging. The writers concur that Arabic has changed to the extent that we have different Arab languages. In other words, Arabic, like Latin, gave birth to French, Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese. Classical Arabic gave birth to Saudi, Egyptian, Tunisian, etc. What is more interesting is that the Egyptian language is now breaking up in to Cairene, Al-Buhra, and so on. If this thesis is true then the book is in my view bone fide an Orientalist effort to destroy Arabic.

Michael Carter, in his paper, tries to present evidence of changes within the structure of Arabic in its spoken Egyptian form, with special attention to those that may become permanent in the language as a whole. Emphasis is placed upon what seems to be spontaneous internal changes in the system, that is, changes that are not an obvious response to contact with other languages.

Kassam M. Wabbi offers a study of the social stratification of Arabic in Alexandria. He takes Labov's study of the social stratification of English in New York to explain language variation in Arabic. He investigates variation of the spoken language in Alexandria, using a quantitative sociolinguistic methodology, and reports on how the modulation of a phonetic variable such as enphasis is related to social differences among speakers in a diglossic community.

Benjamin Harry advances in his paper a model of a multi-glossic continuum in Arabic and shows how speakers shift along it according to several variables. He also reports on an experiment with Egyptian native speakers that points to the regularity of the varieties on the continuum, which may lead to the possibility of writing a unified grammar for all the varieties of Arabic.

Dionisios A. Agius discusses the Sicilian *jarid* (registers) and their linguistic impact on Sicilian Arabic. These documents, covering the period from 1091 to 1266, provide information on estates and land property as well as on the inhabitants who worked for their lords in the allocated territories. They are mostly in Greek, though some are in Arabic or in parallel Arabic and Greek or Arabic and Latin. The data covers information on grain, vines, trees, woodlands, water rights, stock raising, vegetable fibres, floral commodities, communications, and so on. The anaphoronyms found in these registers suggest how their borders made them living. The material does have defects: for the demographer it lacks data on sex ratios of age.

In recent years, there has been a shift of focus in studying Arabic. Gone are the days when Arabs were considered Bedouins living in isolated deserts, their history reduced to what happened under the four Caliphs; in today's world the Arabs are an integral part of the international community, and so is the language they speak.

Keersteeg (Chapter 1) puts us on the right path as he investigates in depth the cyclical relationship of influence between attitudes towards the Arabic language and the formulation of "Arab grammarians"; theories about the origin of speech. Arabic, like any other natural language, has evolved throughout its long history, but its traditional prescriptive mode of study has remained relatively unchanged and has continued to dominate the investigation of the language for some 15 centuries. It has been perceived by Arabs and many Arabophones and Arabophiles as a language immune to change on account of its intimate link with Islam; consequently, new ideas, findings, and approaches of modern linguistics have been routinely dismissed as irrelevant.

Thus, in recent years, there has been a shift of focus from Teaching Arabic as an Foreign Language (TAFL) at the university level, at least in the West. Many stu-

dents, university administrators, and decision-makers have pushed for a change. They have argued for supplementing, if not replacing, the traditional philological programmes (where Arabic is taught either as a means for reading texts or as a linguistic system per se) with more communicative programmes, where the focus is not only on reading but also on speaking, listening and writing skills.

Students of Arabic sociolinguistics will always be obliged to Professor Badawi for his monumental study, *Mazmūnat Al-farabiyya Al-Masriyya fi Misr*, a book that demonstrates as clearly as any why languages should be studied within the framework of their social and cultural context.

Badawi posits five levels in contemporary Egyptian Arabic, based on his study of the oral use of Arabic in the Egyptian media in the 1960s.

Blanc had already defined five levels of style in a cross-dialectal situation (1960), but unlike Blanc, who defined his levels within a purely grammatical perspective, Badawi does so sociolinguistically. Only after establishing his sociolinguistic levels does Badawi list the different linguistic features of each level — *fusha al-turuthi* "classical Arabic of the heritage"; *fusha al-azr* "contemporary classical Arabic"; *amayyad al-matnaghaqin* "colloquial of the educated"; *amayyad al-mutawarrifin* "colloquial of the enlightened"; *amayyad al-ummiyyin* "colloquial of the illiterate".

Badawi emphasises that his analysis of oral Arabic in Egypt is based on sociolinguistic factors, since it predicts which level a group of people will use in certain situations. He claims that his levels are not real, that the dividing lines between them are imaginary, and that one cannot decide where a level starts and where it ends. He proposes the levels as a heuristic device to be used in the study of sociolinguistic and linguistic features. Yet by assigning linguistic characteristics to these levels, Badawi cannot escape the impression others draw that these specific levels do exist as neat categories. Furthermore, by assigning each level a name, Badawi is forced to draw a dividing line between the standard and the colloquial varieties.

The interaction between dialect and cultural elements is now more accessible with the *Dictionary of Egyptian Arabic*, which goes beyond a mere listing of words by including speech genres and a mix of cultural information. Likewise, valuable ethnographic accounts of local cultures such as Lane's *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* or Ahmed Amin's *Qamus Al-Adat wa-l-Taqallid Al-Misriyya* can now be better correlated with partial dialect descriptions like Mahmoud Taymour's *Al-Amthal Al-Amayyida* to enhance our understanding of the contemporary sociolinguistic experience.

One of the annoying aspects of Arabic for the empirical linguist who takes real native speakers seriously is that most educated native speakers appear to reside in the middle of a diglossic continuum, rather than at either or both ends. It is difficult to find contemporary examples of "pure" colloquial, uninfluenced by the literary language, or by Western modes of expression, and it is even more difficult to find examples of the pure literary language, *fusha*, uninfluenced by the spoken language and by Western modes of expression. Speakers themselves are very aware of the source of their linguistic material, and can tell you if a particular lexical item, grammatical pattern, or even vowel marker, is dialectal



Carved in tablets of stone? Not quite, as this 9th century manuscript shows. And if it is not quite the language spoken by 12th century Sicilian Arabs, *Understanding Arabic* will tell you why

or *fusha*. In other words, speakers are acutely aware of the diglossic nature of their language situation, and of the two varieties that make up this situation. However, when they actually produce language, be it spoken or written, the overwhelming tendency is to produce language that falls somewhere between the two.

Nabil M. A. Abdel-Fatah argues that newspaper language need not be viewed with suspicion, as a source of destruction of Classical Arabic. It should be viewed instead as a valuable source of linguistic data on the current changes taking place in Modern Standard Arabic. Systematic analysis of newspaper language would be beneficial not only to descriptive studies of Arabic but also to teachers of Arabic as a foreign language, when their students wish to study the Arabic of today rather than the language of past generations.

In the context of Egyptian journalism, Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) is used to relay current events and commentaries to readers in a linguistic medium that is essentially neutral, simple, yet expressive and communicative. It is these characteristics that set journalistic writing apart from other forms of writing. Even though journalistic language shares some of the characteristics of scientific and literary writing, it is not as specific and dry as the former, nor as aesthetic and metaphorical as the latter, and is essentially employed for pragmatic and social rather than for literary or scientific purposes (Hamza 1961). Scientific and literary language, on the other hand, share some, but not all of the

functions and features of journalistic language. The former shares with journalistic language its concern for factuality, while the latter shares its concern for style.

Most new writing today follows what is commonly known in journalistic jargon as the "inverted pyramid" method, which dictates that any story be presented in paragraphs with the most important elements in the top paragraph followed by the remaining paragraphs in an order of descending importance. This form of writing, as Anderson and Ingle state, "puts the climax of a story at the beginning, in the head". The adoption of this method by Egyptian journalists in the 1950s in the hands of the founders of *Akhbar El-Yom* (newspaper), Ali and Mustafa Amin, reflected a marked change in the philosophy of journalistic writing. Prior to the appearance of *Akhbar El-Yom*, reporters sought to keep their readers in suspense for the longest time possible by holding the crucial details until the end of the report.

However, the book is a qualitative description of language variation, but it must be followed by interpretive that may be applied in explaining language behaviour in the Egyptian community. We hope more studies will be made to elaborate a taxonomy of language situations, and that ultimately, that taxonomy will be replaced by a consistent frame of reference in which this kind of thinking about language and this kind of research might be done.

Reviewed by M. Shebi El-Komy

Nasser's Blessed Movement: Egypt's Free Officers and the July Revolution,
Joel Gordon, AUC Press, Cairo, 1996

Tripping on the middle ground

This is not bedtime reading. Focusing on what he describes as "the transitional period from coup d'état to revolution" Joel Gordon has taken upon himself the task of reinterpreting the first years of the Egyptian revolution of 1952. And as with any historical analysis which rests on very distinct theoretical parameters, his argument works only if you accept all the facets of the theory he meticulously constructs — should the reader be so bold as to tangle with a single aspect of his argument the whole edifice becomes shifty and unconvincing.

Under Nasser, the military regime launched an ambitious programme of political, social and economic reform. Egypt became a leader in Arab and non-aligned politics, as well as a model for political mobilisation and national development throughout the Third World. According to the author, this historical legacy often diverts attention away from the early years of the revolution itself, a period of transition in which Nasser and his colleagues groped for direction. Gordon tries to differentiate his work from the plethora of studies on the revolution, by offering his own version of "how the regime solidified its hold over the state and the effect that process, the political revolution, had on a nascent social revolution". His complex account of the characters and events of the period are supported by interviews with parti-

cipants and observers of the incidents described. Gordon goes to great lengths to justify his choice of topic: he sees the political debate in Egypt today as coloured by the ongoing debate about the aims and successes of the Free Officers, as the nation strives to rediscover its past in formulating policies for the future. This is why the early years of the revolution are so important: according to Gordon, an understanding of the revolution, and of the shape and content of Egyptian political life under Sadat, and subsequently Mubarak, requires a re-evaluation of the decay of liberalism prior to revolution, and of the Neoliberal values the officers chose to propound in the course of their years in power. Through his analysis of the period, he attempts to answer questions such as "What options did Egypt's political leaders promote to the old regime rather?" and "Did the officers have a pre-conceived political agenda?"

But, though well researched, and certainly well-formulated, something is missing from the study. For starters, Gordon never clearly defines his terminology. Even his use of the term "revolution" is never conclusively explained. Throughout the book he steers a wavering middle course between a Marxist perspective and its sometime antithesis, the supposedly "realist" power politics expounded by celebrity statesmen such as Kissinger.

The former views revolutions as the "locomotive of history", the inevitable transition that propels the world from one historical era and economic system to another. Individuals may act in a revolution, but they do not create the conditions for social upheaval — they are instead the beneficiaries of a wave of change which they ride to achieve their ends. The alternative perspective views revolutions not as the inevitable evolution of historical and economic factors, but as the work of power seeking individuals, who subvert the system and create chaos to satisfy their own Machiavellian ends.

What remains to disconcert the reader is that Gordon's book attempts to incorporate both traditions in what turns out to be a rather uneasy union.

For him the Free Officers both did and did not bring about the July Revolution of 1952. Though the Free Officers are at the centre of his study, he rejects theories that depict their role as inevitable. "It is too often taken for granted that Egypt stood on the brink of social revolution, and that if the Free Officers takeover was not inevitable, their assumption of absolute power was." He condemns this as the product of hindsight and the retelling of history by the officers once in power. For him the revolution was a much more haphazard affair, "a military coup organised by junior officers with unfocused

goals and limited ambitions which became over the course of the following decade a revolution from above that transformed Egyptian society and reorientated the way Egyptians look at themselves and the world".

At the same time, he argues that the officers should not be at the centre of the debate. The failure of the old regime was also "the result of external factors... The officers were acted upon as much as they acted." And among the external factors he cites in the well-documented background role of the foreign powers.

In spite of incongruities this book should (and does) form a staple ingredient of any academic booklist, as a supplement to students interested in the politics and the history of the region. Characterising the transition period as "one of experimentation, groping, and shifting alliances", the book focuses on the complex manoeuvring between military and civilians during the first two years of military rule. But that is exactly the problem. To the lay reader with only a sketchy understanding of events, this book becomes confusing. The wealth of detail, though informative, often obscures the bigger picture. Gordon's book preaches to the converted — it is no introduction to first time readers.

Reviewed by Yasmin Allam

Festival of Arabic Music, 1-10 Nov: Programme



Main Hall, Opera House, Giza. Tel 341 2926.

1 Nov, 8pm.

Traditional Oriental songs: lyrics by Mustafa Mahmoud (Egypt), music by Tewfik Al-Basha (Lebanon), conducted by Mustafa Nagui (Egypt); with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra and the Cairo Opera Choir. Musical interlude: Mohamed El-Nehy, with the Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Salah Ghobash (Egypt).

2 Nov, 8pm.

Tarikhia Oriental Music Troupe (Greece), conducted by Nessim Dakour. The Alawia Troupe (Morocco). The National Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Selim Sabah (Egypt). Musical interlude: Reem Khamis (Syria) and Elias Karim (Syria).

3 Nov, 8pm.

The Arabic Music Professors' Syndicate Troupe (Syria), conducted by Mohamed Al-Hamdi. Musical interlude: Khalid Ben Hossain and Ghada perform music by Youssef Al-Mehmei (Kuwait). The Ataya Sharara Sextet (Egypt). Musical interlude: Ghada Raghib (Egypt) and Saber Al-Ruba'i (Tunisia).

Tunisia).

4 Nov, 8pm.

The Conservatoire Orchestra: concerto for violin and orchestra, composed by Attiya Sharara, soloist Hassan Sharara (Egypt). Musical interlude: Manal Madani (Greece). Traditional Music (Iraq). Mohamed Aman Troupe (Saudi Arabia). Musical interlude: Ali Abdel-Kerim (Saudi Arabia) and Hayat Al-Idris (Morocco).

5 Nov, 8pm.

Songs by Sabah Fakhry (Syria). Sabri Mediali Troupe (Syria). Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Salah Ghobash (Egypt). Musical interlude: Elias Karam (Syria) and Nagah Sallam (Lebanon) with the Arabic Music Ensemble (Egypt).

6 Nov, 8pm.

Songs by Sabah Fakhry (Syria). Arabic Music Ensemble: conducted by Selim Sabah (Egypt). Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Salah Ghobash (Egypt). Musical interlude: Noureddin Al-Bali (Tunisia). Hayat Al-Idris (Morocco). Sabri Mediali Troupe (Syria). Musical interlude: Ali Abd-Kerim (Saudi Arabia).

ly Zeidan and Mohamed Abdel-Sattar (Egypt). Musical interlude: Medhat Saleh (Egypt).

9 Nov, 8pm.

Mohamed Abdel-Wahab Troupe, conducted by Qadir Sorour (Egypt). Abu Sherif (Morocco). Nour El-Hussein Ensemble for Arabic Music (Jordan). Musical interlude: Soha Sadeq (Tunisia).

10 Nov, 8pm.

National Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Selim Sabah (Egypt). Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Salah Ghobash (Egypt). Musical interlude: Hanan Shaker (Egypt). Gomhouria Theatre, Gomhouria St Tel 341 2926.

2 Nov, 8pm.

Al-Wondiyya Troupe for Andalusian Music (Algeria). Arabic Music Ensemble, conducted by Salah Ghobash (Egypt). Musical interlude: Saber Al-Ruba'i (Tunisia). National Arabic Music Ensemble and the Opera Children's Choir, conducted by Selim Sabah (Egypt).

9 Nov, 8pm.

The American University Arabic Music Troupe, conducted by Mustafa Ahmed Tra-

ditional Music (Iraq). Musical interlude: Ahmed Ibrahim (Egypt).

Small Hall, Opera House, Giza. Tel 341 2926.

3 Nov, 5.30pm.

Out recital by Mourid Bechar.

4 Nov, 5.30pm.

Children's Choir Troupe, The Suzuki Ensemble for violin (Egypt).

5 Nov, 5.30pm.

The Wedadiya Troupe for Andalusian Music (Algeria).

6 Nov, 5.30pm.

Panel discussion on the works of Mahmud Al-Hafni, to mark his centenary. Panel chair Samha El-Khalil (Egypt). Lecture by Gamal Ben Khemis Al-Shidi: The Role of The Oman Traditional Music Centre in the Conservation of Musical Heritage. The lecturer is the director of the centre. Lecture by Basim Al-Mallah: Omani Music as a Discipline. The lecturer is the centre's advisor and professor of Ethnic Music, Munich University (Oman).

Plain Talk

During my recent visit to London I asked the British Council to arrange meetings with organisations involved in children's literature, a domain of writing that has always interested me. So they did, and I had the pleasure of being introduced to a number of people, either writing for children, or advising on the right books to read.

The Young Book Trust was such an organisation. It was quite an experience walking through their offices and browsing through the thousand and one books displayed on their shelves. The Trust's main task is, in their own words, "to bring children and books together". The Book Trust has always celebrated its 70th anniversary, but it was not until 1970 that the "Young" section was born in order to provide information concerning children's books. With 7,000 new titles published every year, one can realise the magnitude of the Trust's responsibilities.

The work starts with reading the newspapers and scanning them for references to books and publishing houses. All articles and interviews are cut out to be filed and book reviews are checked against the Trust's own records. While I was there, the telephone didn't stop ringing, with all types of questions for the Trust to answer. The majority of calls, however, come from researchers, television, radio, and other media and are mainly concerned with checking facts and arranging contacts with authors.

A large number of inquiries come from bookshops trying to sort out different customers' orders and exploring some of the titles they were not aware of. The ordinary public, though, is not without its own requests, either trying to discuss books, confirming general information or complaining about the services of certain bookshops.

The Trust publishes a magazine called *Our Choice*. It is best described as a report of what children like to read. Twenty schools from all over the United Kingdom receive a big box full of books from the Trust, aimed at the 11 to 16 year-old reader. The pupils were asked to select books which appealed to them, read them and then send their reviews to the Trust. The result of this little experiment is the third edition of *Our Choice*, containing reviews of books varying from realistic stories to poetry



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Raymond Khalife started the evening off with a note of thanks to all guests for their continued support and patronage, followed by an exciting presentation given by an Inter-Continental area executive which took the audience

through landmark events that happened to Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts between 1946 and 1996.

Highlights of these spectacular events were world-renown Alex and Craig, Linda Flemming, Talaat Zein and famous Oriental belly-dancer Dina.

As an end-note the staff of the Semiramis Inter-Continental joined the guests in a celebration with a 50th anniversary parade, a birthday cake and a big Thank You bouquet of balloons.

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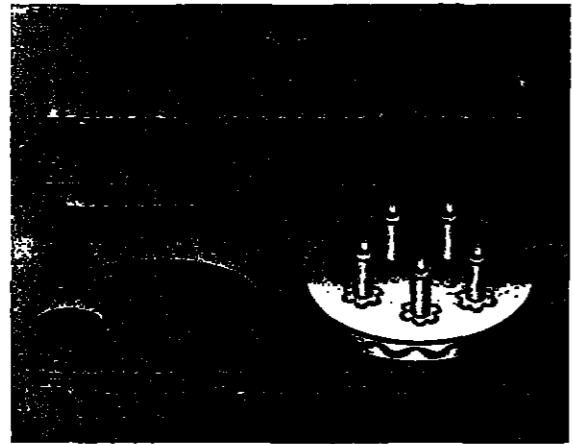
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Mr. Raymond Khalife, president of Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts, Middle East and North Africa, and Mr. Hans Werner Oberlitz, regional vice-president operations Egypt and general manager, Semiramis Inter-Continental, cutting the 50th anniversary cake



Mr. Raymond Khalife, president of Inter-Continental Hotels and Resorts, Middle East and North Africa, amidst Intercontinental senior executives; Mr. Alfonz Maloschik, regional vice-president operations East Africa and general manager Nairobi Inter-Continental, Mr. Ahmed Ramadhan, regional director of operations UAE and general manager, Dubai Inter-Continental, Mr. Hans Werner Oberlitz, regional vice-president operations Egypt and general manager, Semiramis Inter-Continental, Mr. Johnny Fattouch, regional vice-president operations Saudi Arabia and general manager, Jeddah Inter-Continental, Mr. Anthony Liddiard, areas vice-president, sales and marketing, Middle East and Africa and Mr. Roger Keats, regional vice-president operations West Africa and general manager of Ivory Inter-Continental Abidjan cutting the 50th anniversary cake

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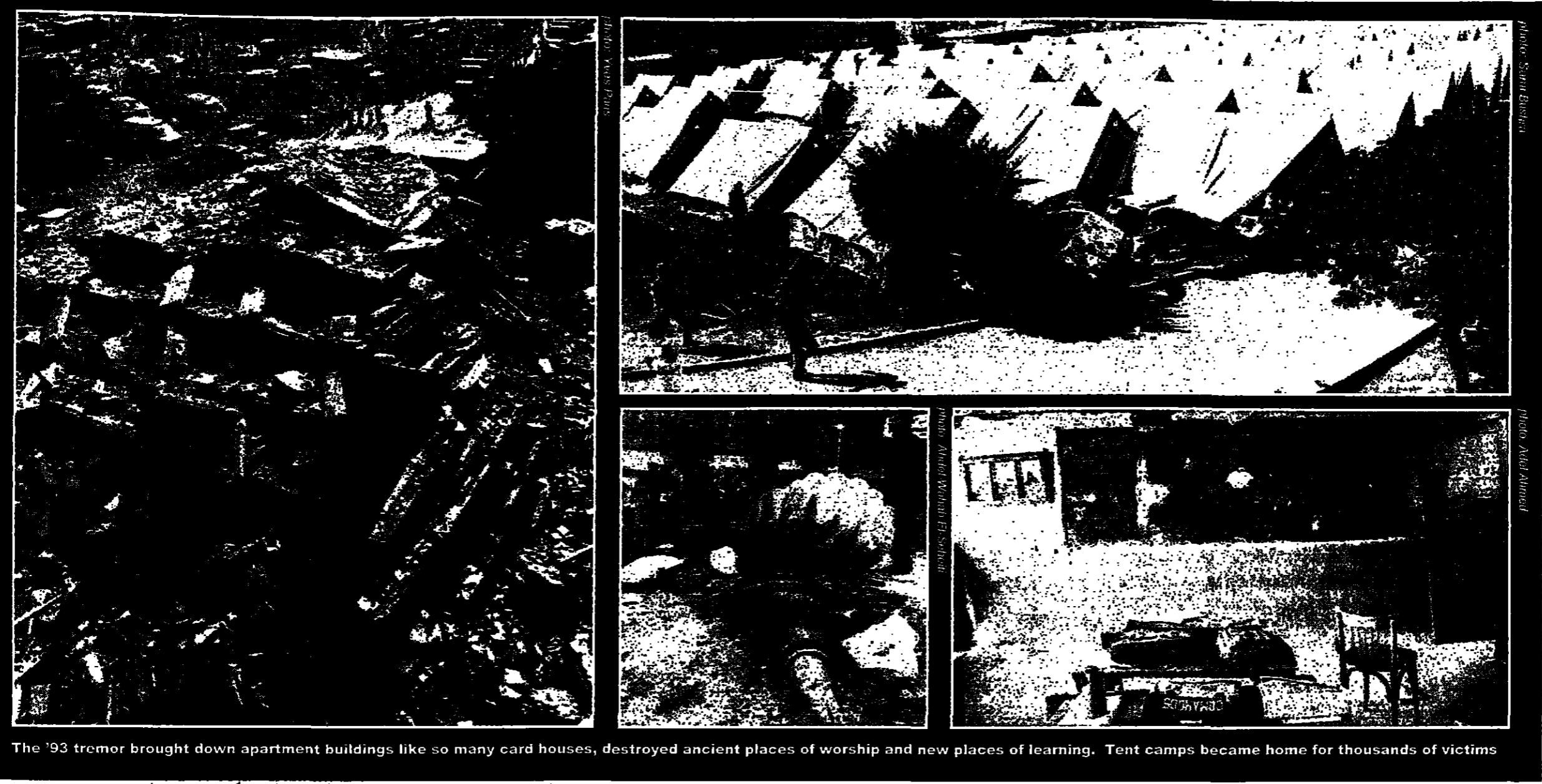
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مكتبة من الأصل

The earth trembled for only one minute, and thousands of lives were changed forever. But how? Four years later, Mariz Tadros explores the answer



The '93 tremor brought down apartment buildings like so many card houses, destroyed ancient places of worship and new places of learning. Tent camps became home for thousands of victims

Earthquake: four years after

For *Umm Amr*, being single parent with three children was hard enough — the last thing she needed was an earthquake to jolt her family's already precarious existence. "My husband left me eight years ago to marry a younger woman. I haven't seen him since, although I hear he is doing well. He hasn't spent a penny on his children since he left," she said.

When the earth shook for a minute in Cairo at 3:14pm, on 12 October 1992, *Umm Amr*'s husband was living in a solid home in Imbaba. But the mother of three lost her home and eventually had to struggle to find somewhere to live. Even though *Umm Amr* was repeatedly told that her place in Boulaq El-Dakrour was unfit to live in because the earthquake had weakened its walls, she and her children continued to live there for over a year until they were relocated to a new one-bedroom unit in El-Nahda, 15km northeast of Cairo.

Umm Amr and her children are one of thousands of families in Greater Cairo displaced by the earthquake and resited by the government in seven settlement areas including Qatameya, Doweiga, El-Nahda, El-Ayyat, Manshiyat El-Bakri, Mughattam and Ain Helwan.

"We were very lucky that when the earthquake happened, leaving thousands on the streets, we had vacant low-cost housing blocks. These were initially built for new university graduates and newlyweds," explained Yousef Hassan, under-secretary of the housing and utilities department for Cairo Governorate. There are three main settlement complexes in Cairo — El-Nahda, Mughattam, and Ain Helwan — he added.

Four years after the earthquake, Hassan admits that not all displaced families in Cairo have been resettled yet: "For a while the construction of new buildings stopped because the contractors had claims on the government which were long overdue. But the government has resolved this problem and over the last six months, more homes have been built. The last 2,000 displaced families will be resettled in El-Nahda and Mughattam by December at the latest."

However, even for those who received their units shortly after the earthquake, there is still some ambiguity about how much of the cost they will have to bear. For *Umm Amr* and many like her, the issue of rent is very distressing. Working full-time as a house cleaner, the change of location meant that she could no longer work for the same households in the heart of Cairo and nobody in her new neighbourhood could afford a cleaner.

The Red Crescent unit in El-Nahda offered her a job two years ago. She earns LE90 monthly — out of which she has to pay LE30 for rent. The rest of her salary must be stretched as far as possible to cover her children's school tuition and food expenses.

"I heard rumours I will have to start paying back rent for the first few months which I thought were free. I can't afford it, unless we all go without food. Will they throw me out if I can't pay?" *Umm Amr* demanded.

Hassan denied the possibility: "Nobody will be forced to leave their homes. We have not thrown anybody out and this is an unlikely scenario. Can you imagine the public reaction if we threw some-

ones out because they were too poor to pay?" He also denied accusations that some residents are now being asked to pay instalments as high as LE1,000 for the first months in which they paid no rent.

"The People's Assembly decided that instalments should be paid over a period of 40 instead of 30 years, with the same interest rate of 6 per cent and they increased the housing loan to LE14,000 per unit," he added. "In the end, don't forget they have brand new homes they would never have dreamt of before. The day the units were being handed out in El-Nahda, you could hear women ululating, many of whom had been living in slum conditions before."

Slum or no slum, alternative housing is still, if anything, a mixed blessing for the majority. On the bright side, millions of pounds were poured into making their new habitat as comprehensive as services as is realistically possible. El-Nahda and Ain Helwan, for instance, were chosen as pilot community development projects by the government and UNICEF. In El-Nahda, the Egyptian Red Crescent Society was involved in resettling over 42,000 people and at Ain Helwan, the Integrated Care Society, a non-governmental organisation chaired by Suzanne Mubarak, helped resettle 30,000 people.

Hoda Barakat, general manager of the Egyptian Red Crescent Society, explained that a few weeks after the earthquake, the society was suddenly confronted with the task of settling low-income families from more than 13 different poor and unplanned districts across Cairo to the remote area of El-Nahda.

"In the beginning, there was no infrastructure, not

all the units were ready, there were no roads, no services or facilities and no transport to and from El-Nahda," recalls Barakat.

Within a short period of time, the Red Crescent helped open three markets, a post office and helped distribute over 150 commercial shops to local inhabitants... According to a survey, the National Council for Childhood and Motherhood (NCCM) conducted at El-Nahda, 52 per cent of families have a monthly income less than LE200. The majority of new settlers had no regular jobs, skills or trade.

The psychological and social turmoil of being suddenly uprooted from one's community of family and friends was as draining as the lack of a solid income. Aida Guindy, member of the executive board of the Integrated Care Society and former UNICEF director for Europe and Africa, was a key player in mobilising community development and cooperation at Ain Helwan. Inaugurated by Suzanne Mubarak in early 1993, Ain Helwan received an award as one of the top 10 urban development projects at the United Nations Habitat II conference held in Turkey last year.

Without a network of friends and neighbours, a new residence would never become home. "For many families, it took over two years to settle down. Some chose to go and live with relatives instead. Some received their apartments but wouldn't live in them. The losses were tremendous — even if it was just an old mattress or a rickety chair or a family bed," said Guindy.

Many felt isolated, bitter and dispirited. "But we still wanted to promote the concept of participation — it is their community; they must be involved in

the planning and execution of any programme; they must participate in the decision-making process," she asserted.

Practically, that meant the election of a cluster leader for every building to communicate, discuss and express the interests of his block. Out of 14 cluster leaders in Ain Helwan, 12 are women. Cluster leaders gather every fortnight for a neighbourhood committee meeting and are elected by the residents annually.

The idea, explained Guindy, was "to empower the community to identify and put forward their own suggestions about how to deal with their most pressing problems." Social clubs for women, the elderly, the disabled and children were set up to foster a feeling of togetherness. Community initiatives ranging from literacy classes, to the ABC's of electricity and plumbing, environmental protection, legal advice, health and prenatal care all targeted women, especially female-headed households like those of *Umm Amr*.

Female-headed households constitute 25 per cent of all families in El-Nahda and 20 per cent in Ain Helwan. Many families were torn apart by the earthquake — some men, having lost their residence, remarried a woman from the neighbourhood and the they wouldn't have to move out. "But now we worry about unemployment amongst the youth which is as high as 40 per cent in Ain Helwan," said Guindy. "The men come to us and tell us that we are concentrating on women and children and not paying sufficient attention to their economic needs. We still have to look into the economic development of our community more creatively."

Trying times

IF KHALED Hassan is renowned in sports circles for being the first disabled swimmer to cross the English Channel, he is better known amongst residents of El-Nahda for having been there with them from the beginning. It all started when Hassan was summoned by the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports to work at their branch in El-Salam City, a new Cairo satellite development, 15km northeast of the capital.

Coincidentally that was the year of the 1992 earthquake and a camp site was set up in the city for displaced families. Tents were provided for 150 families while another 150 were accommodated in the gymnasium courts. For 40 days, Hassan did not go back home to visit his family once. He worked from dawn till late at night. To help register around 1,500 persons from districts including Old Cairo, Shubra, El-Gamaleya and El-Sharabiya, an action group of 15 youths, including Hassan, was mobilised.

"We were especially worried

about security at that point. Al-

though the army and police were there, we were scared that unchecked food supplies would spread around the camps.

The Egyptian Red Crescent arrived soon after the tents were drawn — food, med-

icine and blankets were distributed,

"Hassan recalled.

Now the burden of his household is

greater than before: "Often I have to

pay LE1.50 to get to work because

I'm forced to take a microbus since

the bus is so crammed." Hassan makes LE6.7 a day, LE3 of which is for transport. Consequently, the left-over money to feed the family of seven is not enough.

And, according to Hassan, the

problems don't end there: "I can't buy

my household needs from here, every-

thing is too expensive and the bread

doesn't taste nice. Besides, I'm used

to doing my shopping in El-Azhar."

Mohamed's children will un-

doubtedly grow up in a nicer flat, in a

clean, new district, but their parents

will continue to find difficulty in ad-

justing to this new life — and all the

additional costs it entails.

for almost 6 months after families were resettled in El-Nahda, Hassan also moved with the families to El-Nahda, this time under the umbrella of the Red Crescent.

"Whenever a gas cylinder seller used to pass by banging on a cylinder to call buyers, many would rush to their windows in distress, wondering whether it was an earthquake warning," he said. It was the first year that was particularly difficult for everyone, recounted Hassan. There were no street lights, no roads, no transport and worse, everybody felt alien to the place.

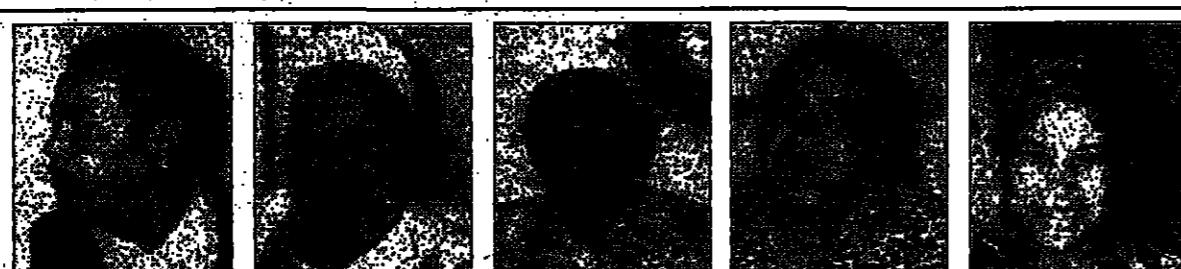
"When the local government was distributing the units, they did not have time to place people from the same area together — bear in mind that the customs, habits and way of living for a family from Shubra El-Kheima are very different from those of El-Sayedas Zeinab. They all ended up being clumped together and rivalries started between families from different districts to see which one can impose its order on the others," said Hassan.

"You just didn't know who your neighbour was — if you had girls, then you automatically became suspicious of your neighbour's sons. So many families ended up locking themselves in their own unit without wanting to have anything to do with the rest," he explained.

Hassan believes that the elderly suffered the most. Sons and daughters who had families of their own units refused to move all the way to El-Nahda just to keep their parents company. At the same time many did not have enough space to accommodate their parents in their own homes.

"One winter night last year I was patrolling the neighbourhood when I saw this 70-year-old woman sleeping on a piece of cardboard. Her children had abandoned her and she had lost all her belongings in the earthquake," Hassan recounted. "In other cases, neighbours would discover that an elderly man or woman has been dead for four or five days without anybody knowing."

This feeling of insecurity and alarm lingered on



Starting from scratch

"We are trying to live, but I can't say we are really living — at least not like before," said Ali Abdel-Magid, speaking from his modest new apartment in El-Nahda, 15 kilometres northeast of Cairo. Before the 1992 earthquake, Abdel-Magid, his wife Yomna, and their six children lived in an old 5-bedroom flat in the lower-middle class Cairo district of El-Sayedia Zeitun. When the earthquake hit, Abdel-Magid was at work and Yomna was cooking lunch. "I grabbed the children and just ran. I could feel the stairs crumbling under my feet," Yomna recalled. Within minutes, the whole building had tumbled to the ground.

"My life savings were lost in a moment under the rubble," lamented Abdel-Magid. Pointing to his virtually toothless mouth, he added, "I got dentures immediately afterwards and my teeth fell out." Abdel-Magid, 60, painted houses for 14 years in Kuwait. "My dream was to give my children the best life possible. I wanted them to have a comfortable home. You should have visited my place before the earthquake. Oh, it was exquisite — the nicest furniture and lots of household appliances. I didn't want my family to want for anything, so I worked day and night to save every paise."

During those 14 years, Abdel-Magid did save a total of LE80,000. But it was all buried in the earthquake. The painter had also kept his

savings at home with his mother rather than in a bank because he wanted to make sure that when he travelled, his mother and sister would have immediate access to any amount of cash.

"My mother was old and sick and my sister had a heart condition — I had to make sure they would be taken care of. But I didn't know this would happen," he sighed. After the earthquake, Abdel-Magid returned with some workers to look for his money. But they found nothing but rubble.

The family finally moved to their new residence in El-Nahda after spending 40 days in a tent at a makeshift camp site in Sayeda Zeitun. "We had to start from scratch," explained Abdel-Magid. "I still haven't finished paying off the instalments for all the furniture you see here."

To pay off the remaining instalments, Abdel-Magid sells sandwiches. On average, his monthly earnings are around LE150 — LE70 of which is for rent. The rent for his old 5-bedroom apartment in Sayeda Zeitun was only LE6.

"I just can't face going back to Kuwait to go up and down scaffolds anymore. I'm too old for that," he explained.

Despite their feelings of comfort, Ibrahim and Sitt Zouab long for the atmosphere of their old home (a communal district), where everyone knew each other well and where they lived a doorstep away from their three married daughters. Now, they are all alone, isolated and feeling somewhat alien in this far away new settlement. The couple are mostly dependent on

the goodwill of their new neighbours for their welfare, but Sitt Zouab adds, "My daughters help, too. They each take turns to come all the way from El-Azhar once a week to bring us food and goodies. I regret not seeing them as much as before, but what can they do? It takes them nearly two hours to come here."

Commuting between the old and the new is a real hassle for many, including Adel Mohamed and Hossneya El-Saad. Mohamed earned his living near Al-Azhar street as a car park attendant. Since he has no real trade, he sees little opportunity in El-Nahda — after all, there are virtually no cars and no shortage of parking.

Now the burden of his household is greater than before: "Often I have to pay LE1.50 to get to work because I'm forced to take a microbus since the bus is so crammed," Mohamed makes LE6.7 a day, LE3 of which is for transport. Consequently, the left-over money to feed the family of seven is not enough.

And, according to Hossneya, the problems don't end there: "I can't buy my household needs from here, everything is too expensive and the bread doesn't taste nice. Besides, I'm used to doing my shopping in El-Azhar."

Mohamed's children will undoubtedly grow up in a nicer flat, in a clean, new district, but their parents will continue to find difficulty in adjusting to this new life — and all the additional costs it entails.



Hassan: a four-year commitment

Baited breath

Former national team member Haithem Farouk is one of a growing number of Egyptian footballers to turn professional abroad. The athlete awaits a call to return home to play on the national team once again, reports Ragil Hallim

At the time of Haithem Farouk's decision to play for the Netherlands' Feyenoord team the consensus among Egyptian football aficionados was that while he had displayed talent during his tenure at Olympic of Alexandria, he was not professional material. The naysayers had right on their side, for although the athlete's name had briefly appeared on the national team's roster, his abilities were questioned after he failed to distinguish himself on the field. Still worse, following their acrimonious split over Farouk's decision to leave the club, Olympic coach Farouk Gaafer went on record saying that Farouk was an amateur who had only participated in friendlies and was as yet untested in official matches.

The news from the Netherlands, however, despite his home critics, is that Farouk is displaying all the right stuff and has become one of the key players to a Feyenoord victory in the Dutch league.

A word of Farouk's triumph began reaching his native soil the Egyptian national team's technical staff, including both Gaafer and former football star Mahmoud El-Khatib, gave thought to adding the player to the national squad. But, as the adage goes, seeing is believing and so El-Khatib booked a flight to Holland to assess the athlete in a report for the Egyptian Football Federation. The federation is expected to tender a response concerning the future of the athlete with the national team imminently.

Farouk recently spoke to *Al-Ahram Weekly* about his life as a professional football player and his ambitions for the future. "I never dreamt of turning pro in one of the leading countries in football, such as the Netherlands," explained Farouk. "I am intoxicated with the experience because the game is very popular in Holland and the matches are very tough. I hope to distinguish myself in the club and prove that Egypt can provide top players."

Farouk began his football career with Olympic Club at the age of 14. In a career highlight the athlete was chosen to represent Egypt on the national team for the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. A year later his short-lived tenure with the Egyptian national team began and ended.

Farouk's first flirtation with the Feyenoord team came about in 1993 when he met former coach Jack Swart, while on a visit to his uncle's home in the Netherlands. It was then that the athlete made the critical decision to attempt a professional career. After a spell training at the Ajax Club under the wing of former Egyptian national team coach Rund Kroll, but having little luck finding a permanent berth at one of the clubs, Farouk went home. He returned to Egypt, but then left again in September 1995, Farouk explained. "Around that time I was introduced to Nol du Raouer who was training the Amicitia Club. But because of its low budget, the club couldn't afford a new defender," Farouk added.

The future began to look more promising when Yugoslavian born Mick Samardic introduced Farouk to officials at Excelsior Club. Negotiations were well under way when Olympia Club raised objections. "Unfortunately Olympia Club refused to release me and attempted to stifle my chances by claiming that I was an amateur," Farouk explained. "It turned out to be a blessing because when I contacted FIFA, its officials told me that being an amateur afforded me the privilege of moving to any club I wished without the approval of my local club."

Despite the protracted negotiations and the advice of FIFA, the negotiations with Excelsior club fell through. Farouk's big break followed soon after when he signed with the Feyenoord Club. The footballer quickly found that while the name of the game is the same, the play in the two countries is completely different.

"In Egypt we depend mainly on defense, whereas here in the Netherlands the play is open," Farouk explained. "That is why the games are always thrilling."

Farouk estimates that his level of play has improved by nearly 30 per cent since his arrival in the Netherlands and he is anxiously awaiting the final outcome of El-Khatib's assessment. Until then, Farouk, along with Egyptian football fans, will have to wait his summons for a place on the national team. "As hard as it is I will wait with patience until I am called to my real place," said Farouk.

Haithem Farouk giving away autographs



Sfaxien of Tunisia were aggressive but Zamalek managed to take control of the field

photo: Mohamed Wassim

A renaissance of sports

Zamalek and Arab Contractors dual wins cheered soccer fans this weekend during qualifications for the finals of the African Champions' and Cup Winners cups. The Contractors are poised to seize the trophy for the first time in 14 years reports Inas Mazhar

Zamalek displayed nerves of steel on Sunday as they squeezed into their fourth African Champions Cup final in 12 years. The Egyptian team converted an early spot kick to defeat Sfaxien of Tunisia 1-0 in Alexandria and forced a penalty shoot-out where their greater accuracy proved decisive.

A first-leg encounter between Tunisia's Sfaxien and Zamalek, played in Tunis two weeks ago, ended with the same 1-0 result in the Tunisian's favour and ensured an all-out battle for the final berth. Zamalek substitute goalkeeper Nader El-Sayed, who succeeded in saving two kicks, helped secure the Egyptian team's 4-3 qualification to the final.

Zamalek's win in the gripping North African showdown was produced despite the absence of suspended defender Nabil Mahmoud and midfielder Ahmed El-Kass.

The Tunisians travelled to Egypt with a dismal away record and fell behind after just 19 minutes of play. Sfaxien rarely abandoned their defensive shell, even in the second half, and Zamalek keeper Hussein El-Sayed was largely consigned to the role of spectator.

Zamalek, banned by the African Football Federation from playing at home in the Cairo Stadium following fan riots a few months ago, is scheduled to play a first-leg match against Shooting Stars of Nigeria next month in an away game. The second will be held in Egypt. Shooting Stars edged into the final with a 1-0 triumph over JS Kabylie of Algeria before a capacity 50,000 crowd in Ibadan.

Arab Contractors in parallel action completed a memorable day for Egypt by reaching their 3rd Cup Winners Cup final by drawing 1-1 against the once-mighty Canon Yaounde of Cameroon. The draw pits the Contractors against Sodigraf of Zaire and has revived the team's hopes of regaining the cup trophy for the first time in 14 years.

Watched by 40,000 spectators under the heavy rain in Cameroon, the Contractors established a one-goal lead after 61 minutes when Abdel-Satar Sabri struck a hard won goal.

The Canon-Contractor home match was played in Cairo a fortnight ago and ended with a 2-1 victory for the Egyptian team. Canon, forcing 14 corners in the first half without unduly troubling goalkeeper Ahmed Saber, equalised two minutes before the final whistle when Jupiter Ngangai converted a penalty.

In an highly anticipated encounter Sodigraf and Arab Contractors are to meet for the first-leg match in Cairo next month.

'I'll be back'

The brilliant career of Nigeria's 20-year-old Olympic hero, Nwankwo Kanu is on hold following the discovery of a life-threatening heart condition. Abeer Anwar reports

Nwankwo Kanu, the 20-year-old star of Nigerian football star has been diagnosed with a heart valve defect on the eve of his season debut with Italy's Internazionale Club. The condition was discovered during routine fitness tests conducted on all players prior to the start of the season and there is speculation that the condition may end what, by all appearances, promised to be a stellar career.

Kanu, who began his professional career with Ajax, left the club after a two-year stint, to play for Internazionale last July for a reported 600,000 sterling a-year contract. He had played in four friendly pre-season matches before he was given the tragic news of the heart ailment that may end his short but illustrious career.

In fact, statements from Kanu's former club Amsterdam's Ajax stand in direct contrast to those given by the team of doctors enlisted by Internazionale. Ajax treasurer, Arie Van Os went on record as saying that his club's medical check-ups had never discovered anything amiss with Kanu's health.

But Bruno Caru, one of the three heart specialists who have studied the Kanu case, expressed dismay that the condition was not detected earlier. "I am surprised that Kanu has been able to play for so many years in Holland and during the recent Olympics without any complaints. He

might have died at any second". Dr Caru explained that the nature of the heart malady precluded any course of treatment other than surgery. The Olympian will have to undergo an operation to replace his aortic valve in an attempt to alleviate his condition.

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Kanu, with the characteristic determination that has propelled him thus far, steadfastly refuses to accept the possibility of an end to his football playing days.

"It's hard to describe the nightmare I am going through, but I don't believe everything is finished. I will go to the best specialists in the world in order to play again. I just can't imagine giving up soccer," commented Piero Volpi, Internazionale's team doctor.

The football hero recently celebrated his 20th birthday in style, collecting a gold medal in the wake of Nigeria's historic defeat of Argentina in the Atlanta Olympics. Kanu's age belies the catalogue of achievements he has amassed since he was

a 1993 World Junior Cup winner. The talented footballer helped Ajax Amsterdam win two Dutch league titles and one World Club Cup after signing on in 1994. Kanu proved his mettle as a substitute on Ajax's 1995 Champions Cup winning team and scored two brilliant goals against Brazil in the recent Olympic semi-finals to steer Nigeria to a memorable 4-3 victory.

Subsequent to his diagnosis by an Italian heart specialist, Kanu flew to the London-based practice of Egyptian cardiologist Dr Magdi Yaqoub for a second opinion. Dr Yaqoub confirmed his condition but was able to give assurances of a promising future.

"Kanu will have to undergo surgery and barring any complications will be able to return to the playing field," explained Yaqoub. The opinion was seconded by another cardiologist residing in America who believes that Kanu will be playing football within six months of surgery.

The intelligence from the medical experts has only added to the speculation surrounding the future of Kanu's career following his surgery in Cleveland, Ohio next month. While it will be some time before the final word, some senior officials have already passed a negative judgment on the Nigerian's future in football. Nwankwo Kanu, however, believes we'll be seeing more of him next season.

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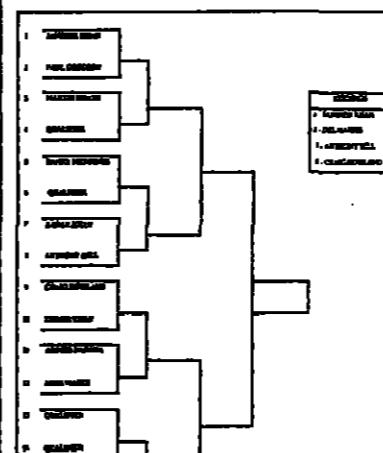




Photo: Epa/Spa

Sonallah Ibrahim:

C Cliffhanging

A life stranger than fiction? Just one deep breath...

In his first, largely autobiographical novel, *Tilk Al-Raiha (The Smell of It)*, Sonallah Ibrahim draws a self-portrait. The accessibility of this portrait, however, was largely determined by censorship. Certain "immoral" passages were censored before publication; indeed *The Smell of It* was banned in 1966. The second edition, of 1969, was "expurgated" of phrases and scenes that the political and literary establishment deemed unacceptable. It was to be twenty years before a Moroccan edition made the novel accessible in its entirety.

In *The Smell of It*, as in his later works, Ibrahim deliberately breached political and moral taboos, revealing without shame all the motives and desires society would have him suppress. He addresses the social and political dimensions of Egyptian reality past and present, but from a unique perspective, that of an experience formulated by years of political activism, imprisonment, self-imposed exile and suffering. Merging Freudianism with Marxism, Ibrahim produces his own vision of both — all his "isms", indeed, are homespun.

Ibrahim's political involvement began when he became a member of a leftist organisation. Eluding the police, he devoted himself to underground work in the Delta countryside. After a short spell, in 1956, he started writing and translating with a brilliant intellectual,

one of the leading figures of the communist movement in Egypt, Shohdi Attiya. The latter had just been released after seven years in prison and had been allowed to establish a small publishing office. But in January 1959 came the crackdown on the left.

Ibrahim and Attiya found themselves constantly on the move from one prison to another — from the Citadel prison to Kharga Oasis prison, from Cairo to Alexandria. There they were given a military trial, then taken to Abu Za'bal prison, where a barbaric re-enactment awaited them. Ibrahim was handicapped to Attiya. The two men were tortured.

In *The Smell of It*, Ibrahim remembered:

"I was sitting beside him, my hand manacled to his. We were at the back of the lorry and the other lorries were behind us. He knew what was going to happen, but he did not say anything... When we arrived it was dawn. They drove us out of the lorry with sticks. We sat on the ground. We were shivering with the cold and fear. He was the tallest one of us. I heard someone say: 'That is him,' and they struck him on the head and said: 'Lower your head, you dog.' They began calling out our names. That they called his, and that was the last time I saw him."

Ibrahim remained in detention for five years, most of which were spent in Kharga Oasis prison. The inmates included a number of outstanding critics and

writers like Alfred Farag, Salah Hafez, Ibrahim Abd-el-Halim, Mahmoud El-Alem, Abdel-Aziz Anis and Mohamed Sido. Ibrahim was closest to a smaller circle of young writers like Abdel-Hakim Qassim who later achieved recognition with his novel *Ayman Al-Sabaa (The Seven Days of Man)*. Raouf Moosa who wrote *Baydat Al-Nazma (Ostrich Egg)* and Kamel El-Qalish, the author of *Sadmal Ta'ir Ghribi (The Shock of an Alien Bird)*. The handful of short stories Ibrahim wrote at the time were published after his release, in *Al-Gomhouria* newspaper.

Ibrahim belonged to a political group that backed Nasser's socialism and nurtured rosy illusions about reality. But in *The Smell of It*, it was to his own living experience that Ibrahim turned. The web of relations he delineates are set against a society beginning to succumb to consumer values, the body of a construction worker who has fallen from a building is left indifferent covered with newspapers, a boy is casually, brutally raped in a police station, ties of 'good-will and mutual support are severed between friends and colleagues. *The Smell of It* is hardly a flower scented whiff of progress and development. It reeks of overflowing sewage, oppression, indifference and decadence.

The integrity of Ibrahim's portraiture in the novel was misunderstood: some took him to be antagonistic to the Nasserite experience and he was identified in certain critical essays as an enemy of "Nasserite totalitarianism". But Ibrahim has always been free of the idealistic falsifications of reality, although he supported the regime's anti-imperialist drive as well as its pan-Arabism and commitment to social reform. In Ibrahim's view, it is the writer's task to uphold a critical sceptical stance towards power — be it political, economic or ideological. According to Ibrahim, the writer's role is to search continually for the new, and to remain in perpetual rebellion against all that is obsolete and redundant.

Likewise, there is no trace of heroism in Ibrahim's autobiographical description of imprisonment, torture, his integrity and unbending commitment to principles. All these aspects of his personality and experience are represented as part of ordinary daily life, an innate way of living and thinking. To him, politics is inseparable from the quotidian, from the subconscious. And even in his subsequent novels *Nigmat Agheyma (August Star)* and *Betruit, Betruit*, politics is interwoven with the pro-

tagonists' consciousness, their vital energy, informing their choice of friends and even their response to women.

Ibrahim's fiction is matter-of-fact about sex, but his treatment of the subject has its own distinctive features. The straightforward descriptions of the body and its functions reflect Ibrahim's disdain of the eccllesiastical view that separates human nature into the soul, fluttering in the upper spheres, versus the body, ruled by disorderly, base passions.

Ibrahim's view embraces human nature in its totality, treating the language of the body with dignity. Beyond raw biology, relationships reflect patterns of domination and submission. Sex is read as an expression of the culturally determined difference between men and women. In Ibrahim's fiction, sex is not steeped in sin, nor is the desired woman ever reduced to an object without will or autonomy. The masculine self-image is also intimately related to social relationships and class issues. To Sonallah, then, sex interfaces with politics, and he focuses on this interrelationship.

If Ibrahim's portrayal of sexual acts is rendered with inaccuracy, his courageous breaking of taboo is premised on an understanding that self-knowledge is to be attained through intimate relationships. Ibrahim charts, beyond eroticism, the impulse to break isolation. At no point, however, does he indulge in sentimentalism and romanticism — in both sex and politics, he dreams with wide-open eyes. He is explicit but never vulgar; his accounts of experiences that would rouse titillants in bourgeois drawing rooms, or outrage among the more ascetic are rendered with sympathy and irony. Masturbation becomes an attempt to embrace illusion, the inability to interact with reality, in sex or politics. In Ibrahim's fiction, the ugliness of political reality, which subjects citizens to the most vicious forms of torture is mirrored in sexual acts or physiological functions generally considered too risqué or too distasteful for print. But Ibrahim sees in the representation of ugliness a certain beauty, and a literary sensibility unlike the dominant one.

Ibrahim's writing has strongly influenced the work of the '90s generation. Iconoclastic like him, they rebel against literary conventions and rhetorical devices, turn to the concrete details of daily life, glory in the corporeal and sexual and uphold the supremacy of individual experience. But the '90s writers differ from Ibrahim in their total disregard for political and social issues. He follows with interest the output of these writers, not unduly disturbed by the more off-beat texts some of them produce. He says they remind him of the '60s generation in their rebellion against the establishment. "The writers of the '60s," he hastens to add, "far from referring to a school with distinctive features, is an umbrella term for disparate experiments — from Gamal El-Ghitani's novels, inspired by medieval historians, or Mohamed El-Baziz's fictional world of myth and archetype, to the realism of Youssef El-Qaid."

The '90s writers, on the other hand, have more in common with each other than the desire to create a rupture with the past. In his view, the most promising among them are bound to mature beyond the focus on literary experiments and start posing questions about what they write and whom they address. Through the quotidian they will come to grips with the political, reading an ice-cream cone the name of the multinational company that presents one of the faces of hegemony. Some of these writers, he asserts, are already starting to walk out of the dead-end street of in-

difference to stand at the edge of the cliff and take a good look.

As for Ibrahim, he has maintained a critical stance toward politics, particularly the variations practiced by the progressive Arab parties which remain abstractions, floating on the surface of daily life. Members of such parties are past masters at reiterating progressive slogans that, however, have no bearing on their relationships at work or at home, with their wives and children, or in their consumer lifestyles. He mentions that some parties often develop into a subsidiary establishment within the regime playing, at best, the role of a pressure group.

Ibrahim has no involvement with any parties or with establishment institutions. Indeed, he has no regular job but leads the lifestyle of a professional writer, working from home and subjected to the usual shortcomings of the publishing industry. But he has achieved literary renown. Many of his novels have been translated into various languages and received much critical acclaim and academic attention abroad.

In addition to writing science fiction for children about oceanography, bumble bees and spiders, he is an accomplished and original translator, his most recent work an anthology of women writers' erotica. Although the positive reception of his writings has brought him much fulfilment, he is aware that his work is often misunderstood. Some foreign readers saw in his novel *Za' (Self)* nothing more than an accomplished satire on contemporary Egypt and Egyptians. Similarly, many Lebanese readers were impressed by his novel *Betruit, Betruit* which they read as a personal attack, overlooking the author's criticism of the situation in the Arab world at large.

Although travel has given him much insight and experience, he is always reluctant to leave home. There was his 1968 trip to Lebanon on the deck of a ship; later he was to work at a news agency in Germany; then he studied film in Moscow for three years. He then returned to Egypt where he has lived since 1974 apart from brief trips to attend conferences and cultural symposia. On these trips he is questioned, perhaps too eagerly, about Arabs, Islamist terrorism, and normalization with Israel. This kind of situation, in his view, is caused by the non-disinterested sponsorship of many cultural events by banks, firms, and political organisations. There are Arab public relation stars, he notes, who act as brokers for these interests.

Looking back, Ibrahim muses about the massive changes that have overtaken the cultural scene. Some thinkers who started out as radicals were assimilated by the establishment, reemerging as hard-line right-wingers. Shallow commercial notions about the role of writers, intellectuals, and the function of literature have gained currency — it is the culture of petro-dollars. Ibrahim, however, is optimistic about new generations who look inward, delving into their own experience in search of solutions to the current impasse.

He perseveres in his search, he enquires about the theme of the quest in contemporary fiction. In his own work, he observes, he often draws on the techniques of that most popular of genres, the detective novel: the emphasis on action and breath-taking suspense. He sees the current state of affairs in the Arab region, the Gulf War and the role of Israel as more melodramatic than the most contrived of fiction at cliffhangers — a state of affairs that calls for X-marks-the-spot techniques to cut away the mystery.

Profile by Ibrahim Fathi

Pack of Cards

by Madame Sosostris



I do love weddings but some of course I love more than others. It has to do with the atmosphere I always say, a feeling of general excitement, the same one felt at one's own wedding — which was not so long ago, regardless of what you may have been led to believe — One such wedding was that of gorgeous Dina to Hosni Mustafa Hassel, at the Cairo Sheraton. Dina's father, Kamal Mustafa is Al-Ahram's deputy managing editor and this is why I felt on such familiar grounds chatting with our Chairman of the Board Ibrahim Nafie and with Al Ghoneim, general manager of Al-Ahram Organisation. I also spotted actor Said Abdel-Ghani who is among Al-Ahram's renowned art critics, resplendent in his favourite colour, and many of my dear colleagues. It was like a reunion only on a grander scale every one dressed up and congratulating the bride and groom who were beaming with happiness.

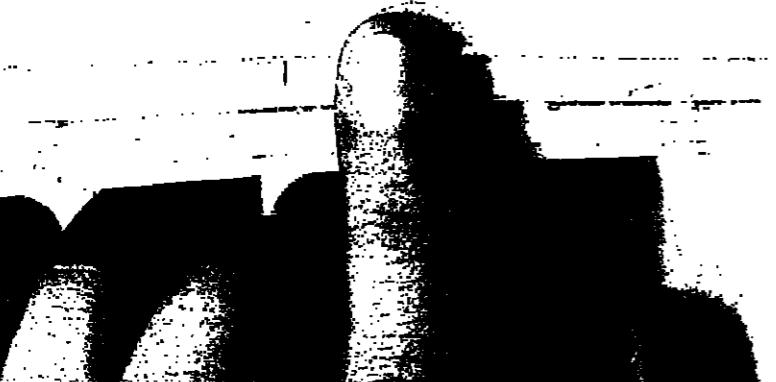
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Cable to Bi

PRESIDENT Hosni sent a cable President Bill Clinton congratulating him on his election for a second term in the White House told reporters yesterday. Mousa went on to express hope that the US play an even more active role in Middle East making following election of President Clinton.

We hope and w confident that Eg American cooperation will gain in strength so that the movement toward a just peace consolidated.

RUSSIAN leader Yeltsin reclaimed his identical powers and control of the nuclear button 24 hours after delegating them to Prime Minister Chernomyrdin. Kremlin announced today the president would rapidly from quintuple bypass heart surgery and told Chernomyrdin during a minute meeting yesterday that he would soon resume a full working schedule.

US cardiologist M DeBakey who oversaw the operation, said five passes were performed during the seven-hour surgery Tuesday and she should fully recover in six to eight weeks.